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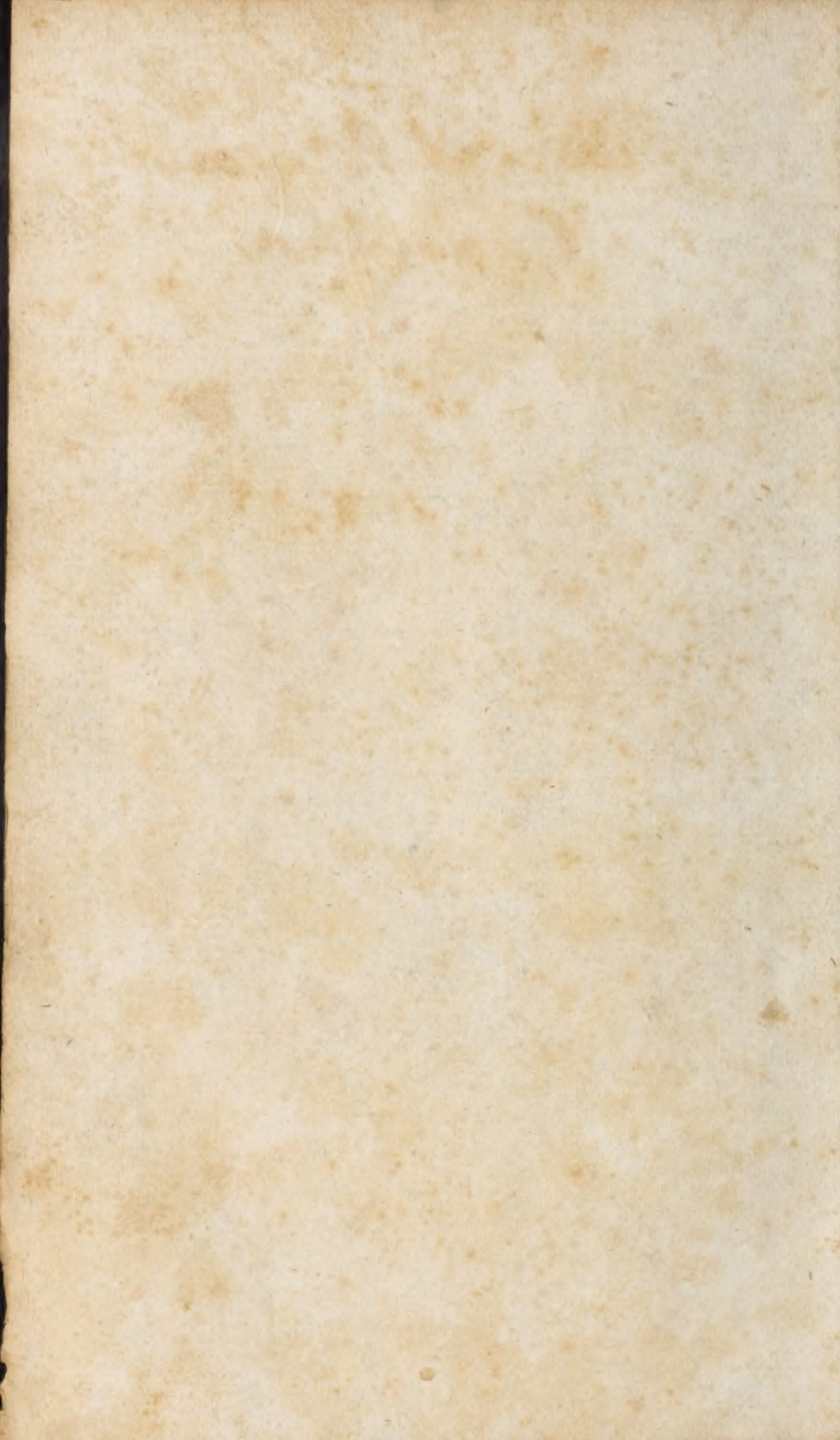
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ROBERT LEIGHTON .

Archbishop of Glasgow.





THE  
SELECT WORKS  
OF  
ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON.

PREPARED FOR THE PRACTICAL USE OF

PRIVATE CHRISTIANS.

WITH AN  
Introductory View  
OF THE  
LIFE, CHARACTER, AND WRITINGS  
OF THE AUTHOR.

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BY GEORGE B. CHEEVER.

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## PREFACE.

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The design of this volume is to bring within the reach of private Christians the most practical and interesting portions of Archbishop Leighton's Complete Works. The selection is in regular order from every part of his writings, and we have endeavored to make it in reality rather his select *works*, than a mere compilation of his beauties; supposing that no person of intelligence would be satisfied with a meagre list of scattered extracts. In the account of his life we have extracted several successive pages from the memoir prefixed to the last edition of his works, and have made free use of the interesting notices to be found in Bishop Burnet's History of his own Times.

The remark on page xl, in regard to the difference between Christians of this and the seventeenth century may be liable to misapprehension. Whoever at this day is a *biblical* Christian, must of necessity be a *revival* Christian; a Christian who prays with fervor and acts with energy for the conversion of his fellow men. But there is a tendency in the external religious effort of this age to *stand in the place* of prayer and the study of the Bible, instead of *proceeding from* the steady performance of those duties, as their inevitable, legitimate result. Our religion, then, is in danger of becoming bustling and superficial. Now if there be a *thoughtful* being in the universe, certainly the Christian ought to be such an individual. The Christians in Leighton's time were so. The Nonconformists especially united pro-

found study and much meditation with great external energy. To make the Christian character complete, both these are necessary. Our danger is that of neglecting prayer and the Bible, the only means that can fit us for usefulness, and of entering on external effort, too much because the general current sets that way, and to be consistent we must go with it, whether our hearts are humble, broken, and contrite, or not. We are in danger of endeavoring to promote revivals, not because, by the acquisition of scriptural wisdom, and by habits of fervent, frequent, persevering prayer, our heads and hearts are prepared for it, and would naturally *constrain* us to it, but because others are working, the world is busy, and we ask, what will men say of *us*. La société, la société ! says Madame De Stael, (and oh how much melancholy truth there is in it, even in regard to social religious effort,) *comme elle rend le cœur dur et l'esprit frivole ! comme elle fait vivre pour ce que l'on dira de vous !* Society, society ! how it renders the heart hard and the mind frivolous ! *how it makes you live for what people will say of you !*

As external effort increases, Prayer and the thoughtful perusal of God's word ought to increase in proportion. We are in danger of acting on a theory directly opposite, and of arguing ourselves into the belief that the frequency and variety of external duty excuses us from spending so much time as usual over the Bible and in prayer. If the Christian would do much for Jesus in this dying world, he must be vigilant, he must be *thoughtful*, he *must* labor in secret, and become eminently *a man of prayer*. Amidst all Paul's journeyings, perils, and labors, he was *right and day praying exceedingly*.



REMARKS  
ON THE  
LIFE, CHARACTER, AND WRITINGS,  
OF  
ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON.

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*Put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.* It is with no small degree of this feeling that we approach the contemplation of a character so holy as that of Archbishop Leighton. Every thing connected with his memory seems sanctified; and when we open a volume of his writings, it is almost as if we opened the Bible.

He was born at Edinburgh in the year 1611. His father, Dr. Alexander Leighton, was a presbyterian clergyman, who, for a virulent attack upon Episcopacy, experienced the painful cruelties of the Star-Chamber under Charles 1st. Leighton had two sisters and a younger brother. He was remarkable even in childhood for his quiet disposition and affectionate serious manners. He seems indeed to have been sanctified from his earliest years, and while yet a boy is said to have directed his studies and views towards the ministry. He was educated at Edinburgh, and after receiving his degree travelled in Europe for several years, pursuing his studies at the same time. From his travels he returned to Scotland, and shortly, in 1641, being then thirty years of age, was ordained Minister of Newbottle near Edinburgh. Here he continued till 1652, when he tendered his resignation to the Presbytery. "He soon came," says Bishop Burnet, "to see into the follies of the presbyterians and to dislike their covenant; particularly their imposing it, and their fury against all who differed from them. He found they were not capable of large thoughts: theirs were narrow, as their tempers were sour. So he grew weary of mixing with them. He scarce ever went to their meetings, and lived in great retirement, minding only the care of his own parish at Newbottle, near Edinburgh. Yet all the opposition that he made to them was, that he preached up a more exact

rule of life, than seemed to them consistent with human nature ; but his own practice did even outshine his doctrine."

It was not strange that a man of his uncommon mildness should find his situation an unpleasant one. Besides having a predilection for the Episcopalian form of worship, he could not endure the spiritual despotism nor the fierce zeal prevalent among the members of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. From one anecdote it would seem that his brethren in the ministry were but ill pleased with his freedom from the intolerant and passionate zeal of the times. In a synod he was publicly reprimanded for not preaching up the times. Who, he asked, does preach up the times? It was answered that all the brethren did it. Then, he rejoined, if all of you preach up the times, you may surely allow one poor brother to preach up Christ Jesus and eternity.

About this period he met with a calamity in the loss of a thousand pounds, which constituted his whole property. He had suffered it to remain in the hands of a merchant without adequate security.

To the remonstrances of Mr. Lightmaker, his brother in law, who urged him to come to London and vest it more safely, he replied, "any pittance belonging to me may possibly be useful for my subsistence ; but truly if something else draw me not, I shall never bestow so long a journey on that I account so mean a business." When the merchant failed, as had been anticipated, and Leighton's patrimony was irretrievably lost, he said to his brother in law, "That little that was in Mr. E.'s hands hath failed me ; but I shall either have no need of it, or be supplied in some other way."

Being in England sometime afterwards, his recent loss was touched upon by Mr. Lightmaker, who regretted that he had so sadly misplaced his confidence. "Oh ! no more of that," cried Leighton ; "the good man has escaped from the care and vexation of that business." "What, is that all you make of the matter?" rejoined his brother-in-law with surprise. "Truly," answered the other, "if the Duke of Newcastle, after losing nineteen times as much of yearly income, can dance and sing, while the solid hopes of Christianity will not avail to support us, we had better be as the world."

"Somewhere about this time,—for the date cannot be assigned with certainty,—there happened an accident which drew forth a proof of his admirable self-possession in the sudden prospect of death. He had taken the water at the Savoy stairs, in company with his brother Sir Ellis, his lady, and some others, and was on his way to Lambeth, when, owing to some mismanagement, the

boat was in imminent danger of going to the bottom. While the rest of the party were pale with terror, and most of them crying out, Leighton never for a moment lost his accustomed serenity. To some, who afterwards expressed their astonishment at his calmness, he replied ; "Why, what harm would it have been, if we had been safely landed on the OTHER SIDE?" In the habit of dying daily, and of daily conversing with the world of spirits, he could never be surprised or disconcerted by a summons to depart out of the body."

"Another anecdote of him, which bears witness to his devout equanimity on perilous occasions, belongs to this period of his history. During the civil wars, when the royalist army was lying in Scotland, Leighton was anxious to visit his brother, who bore arms in the king's service, before an engagement which was daily expected should take place. On his way to the camp he was benighted in the midst of a vast thicket ; and having deviated from the path, he sought in vain for an outlet. Almost spent with fatigue and hunger, he began to think his situation desperate, and dismounting he spread his cloak upon the ground, and knelt down to pray. With implicit devotion he resigned his soul to God ; entreating, however, that if it were not the divine pleasure for him then to conclude his days, some way of deliverance might be opened. Then remounting his horse, he threw the reins upon its neck ; and the animal, left to itself, or rather to the conduct of an Almighty Providence, made straight into the high road, threading all the mazes of the wood with unerring certainty."

At first his resignation was not accepted, but afterwards, in 1652, he was discharged from the ministerial duties which he had performed for more than eleven years, with such holy, unexampled faithfulness. Not long after this, he was chosen principal of the University of Edinburgh, and remained in this situation till 1662. Burnet's account of this event is as follows. "He had generally the reputation of a saint, and of something above human nature in him : So the Mastership of the college of Edinburgh falling vacant sometime after, and it being in the gift of the city, he was prevailed with to accept of it, because in it he was wholly separated from all church matters. He continued ten years in that post, and was a great blessing in it ; for he talked so to all the youth of any capacity or distinction, that it had a great effect on many of them. He preached often to them ; and if crowds broke in, which they were apt to do, he would have gone on in his sermon in Latin, with a purity and life that charmed all who understood it." It was his custom to deliver a theological Prelection once a week.



In 1662 he was exalted to "a sphere of stormy greatness, wherein his apostolic virtues gilded the gloom, which it exceeded even their influence to dispel." He was appointed by the King with several other bishops to commence the reestablishment of the Episcopal church in Scotland. He acceded to the preferment from a pure sense of duty, contrary to his own desires, and in the hope by wise and gentle measures to soften the prejudices of his countrymen, and accomplish the union of the churches of England and Scotland. At his own special request he was appointed to the least important See, the inconsiderable one of Dunblane in Perthshire. His reluctance to acquiesce at any rate in the promotion, "was only overcome by a peremptory order of the court, requiring him to accept it, unless he thought in his conscience that the episcopal office was unlawful." This he could not conscientiously declare. In a letter to the Rev. James Aird, Minister at Torry, which exhibits in a very interesting manner his feelings on this occasion he observes,

"One comfort I have, that in what is pressed on me there is the least of my own choice, yea on the contrary the strongest aversion that ever I had to any thing in all my life : the difficulty in short lies in a necessity of either owning a scruple which I have not, or the rudest disobedience to authority, that may be. Meanwhile hope well of me, and pray for me. This word I will add, that as there has been nothing of my choice in the thing, so I undergo it, if it must be, as a mortification, and that greater than a cell and haircloth : and whether any will believe this or no I am not careful."

"The bishops came down to Scotland," says Burnet, "soon after their consecration, all in one coach. Leighton told me he believed they were weary of him, for he was very weary of them ; but he, finding they intended to be received at Edinburgh with some pomp, left them at Morpeth, and came to Edinburgh a few days before them. He hated all appearances of vanity."

He was a true Shepherd and Bishop of souls. In a thousand ways the holy glories of his character shone in his wise and pious measures for the promotion of religion in Scotland. "The only priority he sought" writes his biographer, "was in labors ; the only ascendancy he coveted was in self-denial and holiness ; and in these respects he had few competitors for preeminence. Proceeding steadily upon these principles, and exerting all his influence to impart to others the same fervency of spirit, he drew upon himself the eyes of all Scotland, which gazed with amazement

at his bright and singular virtues, as at a star of unrivalled brilliance, newly added to the sky. Even the presbyterians were softened by his Christian urbanity and condescension, and were constrained to admit that on him had descended a double portion of the apostolic spirit. Had his colleagues in office been kin to him in temper, it is not extravagant to believe that the attempt to restore episcopacy would have had a more prosperous issue."

But he soon found it vain to hope, while plans conceived in a spirit of imprudence and harshness were carried into execution by irreligious men with irreligious fury. "I find him expressing himself," says his biographer, "in allusion no doubt to the leading men of this period, with a poignant recollection of the selfish craft by which they were characterized. Seeing them destitute of Christian simplicity and singleness of purpose, he lost all heart about the issue of their measures; and designated them, in scriptural language, as empty vines bringing forth fruit unto themselves. "I have met with many cunning plotters," he would say, "but with few truly honest and skilful undertakers. Many have I seen who were wise and great as to this world, but of such as are willing to be weak that others may be strong, and whose only aim it is to promote the prosperity of Zion, have I not found one in ten thousand."

In 1665 he came to the resolution to lay down his charge, and accordingly bade a solemn farewell to the clergy, before going to London to seek permission to resign. The king was affected by his representations, and pledged himself to more prudent and conciliatory measures; but would not consent to Leighton's resignation. The account of his interview, which he supposed would be the last, with his clerical brethren, (taken from the records of his charges to the clergy,) is full of pathos.

"After the affairs of the synod were ended, the Bishop shewed the brethren he had somewhat to impart to them that concerned himself, which though it imported little or nothing, either to them or to the church, yet he judged it his duty to acquaint them with; and it was, the resolution he had taken of retiring from his public charge; and that all the account he could give of the reasons moving him to it was briefly this; the sense he had of his own unworthiness of so high a station in the church, and his weariness of the contentions of this church, which seemed rather to be growing than abating, and by their growth did make so great abatement of that Christian meekness and mutual charity, that is so much more worth than the whole sum of all that we contend about. He thanked the brethren for all their undeserved respect

and kindness manifested to himself all along ; and desired their good construction of the poor endeavors he had used to serve them, and to assist them in promoting the work of the ministry, and the great designs of the gospel, in their bounds ; and if in any thing in word or deed he had offended them, or any of them, he earnestly and humbly craved their pardon : and having recommended to them to continue in the study of peace and holiness, and of ardent love to our great Lord and Master, and to the souls he hath so dearly bought, he closed with these words of the apostle : Finally, brethren, farewell : be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, and live in peace ; and the God of peace and love shall be with you."

In 1669 Leighton was appointed Archbishop of Glasgow on the removal of Archbishop Burnet. The short account which Bishop Burnet, in the history of his own times, has given of this event and its immediate results in the movements of Leighton, his clergy, and the presbyterian ministers, is admirably characteristic of all the parties.

"Leighton undertook the administration of the See of Glasgow : and it was a year after this, before he was prevailed on to be translated thither. He came, upon this, to Glasgow, and held a synod of his clergy ; in which nothing was to be heard, but complaints of desertion and ill usage from them all. Leighton in a sermon that he preached to them, and in several discourses both public and private, exhorted them to look up more to God, to consider themselves as the ministers of the cross of Christ, to bear the contempt and ill usage they met with, as a cross laid on them for the exercise of their faith and patience, to lay aside all the appetites of revenge, to humble themselves before God, to have many days for secret fasting and prayers, and to meet often together, that they might quicken and assist one another in those holy exercises ; and then they might expect blessing from heaven upon their labors. This was a new strain to the clergy. They had nothing to say against it ; but it was a comfortless doctrine to them and they had not been accustomed to it. No speedy ways were proposed for forcing the people to come to church, nor for sending soldiers among them, or raising the fines to which they were liable. So they went home, as little edified with their new bishop as he was with them. When this was over, he went round some parts of the country, to the most eminent of the indulged ministers, and carried me with him. His business was to persuade them to hearken to propositions of peace. He told them some of them would be quickly sent for to Edinburgh, where



terms would be offered them in order to the making up our differences: all was sincerely meant: they would meet with no artifices nor hardships: and if they received those offers heartily, they would be turned into laws: and all the vacancies then in the church would be filled by their brethren. They received this with so much indifference, or rather neglect, that it would have cooled any zeal that was less warm and less active than that good man's was. They were scarce civil; and did not so much as thank him for his tenderness and care: the more artful among them, such as Hutcheson, said it was a thing of general concern, and they were but single men. Others were more metaphysical, and entertained us with some poor arguings and distinctions. Leighton began to lose heart. Yet he was resolved to set the negotiation on foot, and carry it as far as he could."

In 1670 Leighton had several conferences with the presbyterian leaders, and offered such concessions as in effect almost vacated the episcopal office; but it was all in vain. "All was lost labor," says Burnet; "hot men among them were positive; and all of them were full of contention." The whole account of these convocations, and indeed of the prosecution and end of king Charles' designs for the establishment of episcopacy in Scotland, is one of the most interesting and instructive portions of Burnet's History. Their last meeting took place at the house of Lord Rothes, "where, says Leighton's biographer, this tedious treaty was concluded by Hutcheson, in the name of the whole fraternity, returning this 'short and dry answer,' as Leighton designates it; 'We are not free in conscience to close with the propositions, made by the Bishop of Dunblane, as satisfactory.' Leighton begged for an explicit statement of their reasons for persisting in a course, so contrary to the peace and welfare of the church; but the presbyterian representatives excused themselves from all argument on the subject. Being requested to submit propositions, on their part, which might furnish a hopeful basis for a fresh negotiation, they declined the invitation, on the plea that their sentiments were already before the world; thereby signifying that nothing would satisfy them, short of the utter extinction of episcopacy. The Archbishop, perceiving that no terms would be accepted by this untractable race, delivered himself, before the assembly broke up, at considerable length and with energetic solemnity. He unfolded the motives, by which he had been actuated in setting afloat this negotiation, and in still urging it forward, when wave upon wave was driving it back. 'My sole object has been to procure peace, and to advance the interests

of true religion. In following up this object, I have made several proposals, which I am fully sensible involved great diminutions of the just rights of episcopacy. Yet, since all church power is intended for edification, and not for destruction, I thought that, in our present circumstances, episcopacy might do more for the prosperity of Christ's kingdom by relaxing some of its just pretensions, than it could by keeping hold of all its rightful authority. It is not from any mistrust of the soundness of our cause, that I have offered these abatements; for I am well convinced that episcopacy has subsisted from the apostolic age of the church. Perhaps I may have wronged my own order in making such large concessions: but the unerring discerners of hearts will justify my motives; and I hope ere long to stand excused with my own brethren. You have thought fit to reject our overtures, without assigning any reason for the rejection, and without suggesting any healing measures in the room of ours. The continuance of the divisions, through which religion languishes, must consequently lie at your door. Before God and man I wash my hands of whatever evils may result from the rupture of this treaty. I have done my utmost to repair the temple of the Lord; and my sorrow will not be embittered by compunction, should a flood of miseries hereafter rush in through the gap you have refused to assist me in closing.' "

Leighton continued two or three years longer in his patient but fruitless attempts for union and peace. His spirit had long been tried by the worldliness of his colleagues, the rashness and tyranny of the government, the rigid obstinacy of the presbyterians, and the distractions so multiplied around him. At length, considering his work at an end, he resolved to give up his charge and retire from the world. "The dressing and undressing his soul, as he used to call his devotional exercises, was the business to which his few remaining days ought to be consecrated; and he "longed to escape, if only into the air among the birds," from the ungrateful service, which he had not declined, when summoned to it by the exigencies of the church; but from which he held himself discharged, now that it was become evident that no good could ensue from his remaining in it." There is a letter to his sister which discloses his feelings on this subject; a shade of sadness rests on his expressions, but they breathe perfect resignation to the will of God.

DEAR SISTER,

I was strangely surprised to see the bearer here. What could

occasion it I do not yet understand. At parting he earnestly desired a line to you, which without his desire my own affection would have carried me to, if I knew what to say but what I trust you do : and 'tis that our joint business is to die daily to this world and self, that what little remains of our life we may live to Him that died for us. For myself, to what purpose is it to tell you, what the bearer can, that I grow old and sickly ; and though I have here great retirement, as great and possibly greater than I could readily find any where else, yet I am still panting after a retreat from this place and all public charge, and next to rest in the grave. It is the pressingest desire I have of any thing in this world ; and, if it might be, with you, or near you. But our heavenly Father, we quietly resigning all to him, both knows and will do what is best. Remember my kindest affection to your son and daughter, and to Mr. Siderfin, and pray for

Your poor weary brother,

*Dunblane, April 19th.*

R. L.

Burnet has given the account of his retirement. "Leighton upon all this concluded he could do no good on either side : he had gained no ground on the presbyterians, and was suspected and hated by the episcopal party. So he resolved to retire from all public employments and to spend the rest of his days in a corner far from noise and business, and to give himself wholly to prayer and meditation, since he saw he could not carry on his great designs of healing and reforming the church, on which he had set his heart. He had gathered together many instances out of church history, of bishops that had left their Sees and retired from the world ; and was much pleased with these.—He said, his work seemed to be at an end ; he had no more to do unless he had a mind to please himself with the lazy enjoying a good revenue. So he could not be wrought on by all that could be laid before him ; but followed Duke Lauderdale to court, and begged leave to retire from his archbishoprick. The Duke could by no means consent to this. So he desired that he might be allowed to do it within a year. Duke Lauderdale thought so much time was gained : so to be rid of his importunities he moved the king to promise him, that if he did not change his mind, he would within the year accept of his resignation. He came back much pleased with what he had obtained ; and said to me upon it, there was now but one uneasy stage between him and rest, and he would wrestle through, the best he could."



As soon as the year was completed he hastened to London and laid down his archbishopric. After his resignation he resided a short time in the college of Edinburgh; thence he retired to Broadhurst, an estate in Horsted Keynes, Sussex, belonging to his sister the widow of Edward Lightmaker, Esq., the same sister to whom he had expressed his earnest wishes for such a retreat, in the letter on the preceding page. With her he continued till the year 1684, in which he died.

Before the account of his death, the reader will be gratified in perusing the following deeply interesting passages from the description of his life and character by his biographer, the Rev. J. N. Pearson. We have quoted some paragraphs already; what follows seems to relate principally to the interval between his retirement and his death.

“Of the habits and employments of this man of God, during the sequel of his life, there remain but few particulars. Some interesting notices, however, of his general conversation, which are mostly gleaned from his nephew’s letter to the Bishop of Salisbury, the pen of biography will not be employed amiss in recording.

“We have seen that it was his purpose, in divorcing himself from the world, to give up the remnant of his days to secret and tranquil devotion. Having spent his prime in the active duties of his profession, and in the service of his fellow-creatures, he saw no impropriety, but rather a suitableness, in consecrating his declining years more immediately to God; and in making the last stage of earthly existence a season of unintermitted preparation for the scene, upon which he was to enter at the end of his journey. Accordingly he lived in great seclusion; and abstained, to the utmost, that charity and courtesy would allow, from giving and receiving visits. Let it not be supposed, however, that he withdrew from ministerial employments. After disburdening himself of the episcopal dignity, he again took to the vocation of a parish minister, and was constantly engaged at Horsted Keynes, or of one of the neighboring churches, in reading prayers or in preaching. In the peasant’s cottage, likewise,

—— his tongue dropt manna:

and long after his decease he was talked of by the poor of his village with affectionate reverence. With deep feeling would they recall his divine counsels and consolations; his tenderness in private converse; and the impressive sanctity which he carried into the solemnities of public worship.

"Of the devotion which mingled with his own life, flowing easily from a wellspring of divine love in his soul, it would be hard to speak extravagantly. Prayer and praise were his business and his pleasure. His manner of praying was so earnest and importunate, as proved that his soul mounted up to God in the flame of his oral aspirations. Although none was ever less tainted with a mechanical spirit in religion, yet he denied that the use of written forms put to flight the power of devotion; and he himself occasionally used them with an energy and feeling, by which his hearers were powerfully excited. To the Lord's prayer he was particularly partial, and said of it, "Oh, the spirit of this prayer would make rare Christians!" Considering prayer, fervent, frequent, intercessory prayer, to be a capital part of the clerical office, he would repeat with great approbation that apophthegm of a pious bishop—"*Necesse est, non ut multum legamus, sed ut multum oremus.*"\* This he accounted the vessel, with which alone living water can be drawn from the well of divine mysteries. Without it he thought the application of the greatest human powers to theology would turn out a laborious vanity: and in support of this opinion he adduced the confession of Erasmus, that, when he began to approach the verities of celestial wisdom, he thought he understood them pretty well; but, after much study of commentators, he was infinitely more perplexed than before. With what a holy emphasis would Leighton exclaim, in commenting upon those words of David—"Thou (O God) has taught me"—"*Non homines, nec consuetudo, nec industria mea, sed tu docuisti.*"†

"It is not, however, to be imagined that this great prelate, who was himself one of the most learned men of a very learned age, undervalued human erudition. On the contrary, he greatly encouraged it in his clergy; and has been heard to declare that there could not be too much, if it were but sanctified. But then he set far higher store by real piety; and would remark, with a felicitous introduction of a passage from Seneca,—"*Non opus est multis literis ad bonam mentem,*‡ but to be established in grace and replenished with the spirit." Pointing to his books one day, he said to his nephew,—"One devout thought is worth them all;" meaning, no doubt, that no accumulation of knowledge is comparable in value with internal holiness.

"Of his delight in the inspired volume the amplest proof is af-

\* It is not necessary for us to read much, but to pray much.

† Not men, nor habit, nor my own industry, but Thou hast taught me.

‡ To have a good mind we do not need to be learned, but &c.

forded by his writings, which are a golden west, thickly studded with precious stones from that mine, in beautiful arrangement. His French Bible, now in the library of Dunblane, is marked in numerous places; and the blank leaves of it are filled with extracts made by his own pen from Jerome, Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzen, and several other Fathers. But the Bible, which he had in daily use, gave yet stronger testimony to his intimate and delightful acquaintance with its contents. With the book of psalms he was particularly conversant, and would sometimes style it by an elegant application of a scriptural metaphor, "a bundle of myrrh, that ought to lie day and night in the bosom\*." "Scarce a line in that sacred psalter (writes his nephew) that hath passed without the stroke of his pencil."

"To him the Sabbath was a festive day; and he would repair to God's house with a willing spirit when his body was infirm. One rainy Sunday, when through indisposition he was hardly equal to going abroad, he still persisted in attending church, and said in excuse for his apparent rashness, "Were the weather fair I would stay at home, but since it is foul I must go; lest I be thought to countenance, by my example, the irreligious practice of letting trivial hindrances keep us back from public worship."

"Averse as he was to parade of all kinds, and especially to dizenizing out religion in modish draperies, yet he was not for shrouding her in a gloomy cowl, and exposing her to needless scorn, as he thought the Quakers did, by dressing her with "an hood and bells." It was his wish to see public worship so ordered as to exclude superfluous ornament, while it preserved those sober decencies, which at once protect the majesty of religion, and help to keep awake a devout spirit in the worshipper.

"It may have appeared to some of my readers, that Leighton's latitudinarian views on the subject of ecclesiastical polity bordered upon the romantic, and were unsuitable to the present imperfect state of the Christian church. But it is due to him not to forget, that he was an inexorable enemy to laxity and disorder; and maintained the necessity of a regular and exact administration of the church, although he was comparatively indifferent about the form of that administration, if it did but ensure a good supply for the religious wants of the people. "The mode of church government, he would say, is immaterial; but peace and

\* Song of Solomon, chap. i. v. 13.



concord, kindness and goodwill, are indispensable. But, alas, I rarely find, in these days, men nerved with a holy resolution to contend for the substance more than for the ceremony; and disposed in weak and indifferent things to be weak and compliant." Among such things he classed those points of discipline, on which the dissenters stood out, declaring that "he could not in earnest find them to amount to more."

"The religion of this preeminent saint was incorporated with the whole frame of his life and conversation. This gave a peculiarity, which was striking and impressive, to many of his ordinary actions. They were the same things which other men did, but they were done in another manner, and bore the shining print of his angelic spirit. So impressively was this the case, that his nephew, when a little child, struck with his reverential manner of returning thanks after a meal, observed to his mother, that "his uncle did not give thanks like other folk."

"It may be doubted whether Christianity, in the days of its youthful vigor, gave birth to a more finished pattern than Leighton of the love of holiness. It was truly his reigning passion; and his longing to depart hence grew out of an intense desire to be transformed into the divine likeness. "To be content to stay always in this world, he observed, is above the obedience of angels. Those holy spirits are employed according to the perfection of their natures, and restlessness in hymns of praise is their only rest: but the utmost we poor mortals can attain to, is to lie awake in the dark, and a great piece of art and patience it is *spatiosam fallere noctem*." Often would he bewail the proneness of Christians to stop short of that perfection, the pursuit of which is enjoined upon us; and it was his grief to observe, that even good men are content to be "low and stunted vines." The wish nearest his heart was, to attain to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; and all his singularities, for such to our reproach they are, arose from this desire being in him so much more ardent than it is in ordinary Christians. In the subjoined letter, this habit of mind, this insatiable longing after perfect holiness is finely pourtrayed. It was written when he was principal of the University of Edinburgh.

SIR,

Oh! what a weariness is it to live amongst men, and find so few men; and amongst Christians, and find so few Christians; so much talk and so little action; religion turned almost to a tune and air of words; and amidst all our pretty discourses, pusillan-

imous and base, and so easily dragged into the mire, self and flesh and pride and passion domineering, while we speak of being in Christ and clothed with him, and believe it, because we speak it so often and so confidently. Well, I know you are not willing to be thus gulled; and having some glances of the beauty of holiness, aim no lower than perfection, which in the end we hope to attain; and in the meanwhile the smallest advances towards it are more worth than crowns and sceptres. I believe it, you often think on these words of the blessed champion Paul, (1 Cor. ix. 24, &c.) There is a noble guest within us. Oh! let all our business be to entertain him honorably, and to live in celestial love within; that will make all things without be very contemptible in our eyes.—I should rove on did not I stop myself, it falling out well too for that, to be hard upon the post-hours ere I thought of writing. Therefore, “good night,” is all I add; for whatever hour it comes to your hand, I believe you are as sensible as I that it is still night: but the comfort is, it draws nigh towards that bright morning that shall make amends,

Your weary fellow-pilgrim,

R. L.

“Of the effectual eloquence of Leighton’s great example a striking instance is adduced in Mr. Edward Lightmaker’s letter. The writer’s father, after witnessing the holy and mortified life of this eminent saint, became sensible, that a man is in no safe condition for dying, unless he be striving after the highest degrees of piety. “If none shall go to heaven,” he exclaimed, “but so holy a man as this, what will become of me?” Under these impressions he very much withdrew from the world; relinquished a profitable business, because of its dangerous entanglements; and made the care of his ultimate felicity his chief occupation.

“Such consequences might well be expected to flow from an intimacy with Leighton, for his discourse breathed the spirit of heaven. To no one, perhaps, do the exquisite lines of the Christian poet Cowper more accurately apply:

When one, that holds communion with the skies,  
Has fill’d his urn where these pure waters rise,  
And once more mingles with us meaner things,  
’Tis e’en as if an angel shook his wings;  
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,  
That tells us whence his treasures are supplied.

“He seldom discoursed on secular matters, without happily and naturally throwing in some spiritual reflections; and it was his

professed opinion, that nothing takes off more from the authority of ministers and the efficacy of their message, than a custom of vain and frivolous conversation. Indeed, "he had brought himself into so composed a gravity, (writes his first biographer,) that I never saw him laugh, and but seldom smile; and he kept himself in such a constant recollection, that I do not remember that I ever heard him say one idle word. He seemed to be in a perpetual meditation." Although he was not given to sermonize, yet any little incident, that fell under his observation, would cause some pious sentiment to drop from him; just as the slightest motion makes a brimful goblet run over. Meeting a blind beggar one day, he observed, "Methinks this poor sufferer cries out in behalf of the whole human race, as its representative; and let what he so earnestly craves be given him, as readily as God bestows a cure on the spiritually blind who ask it."—"It is extremely severe," said his sister to him, speaking of the season. "But thou, O God, hast made summer and winter," was his devout reply.—Some one saying, "You have been to hear a sermon:" "I met a sermon," was his answer, "a sermon *de facto*, for I met a corpse; and rightly and profitably are the funeral rites observed, when the living lay it to heart." Thus he endeavored to derive spiritual good out of every passing circumstance, and to communicate good to others.

"In a soul so full of heaven there was little room for earthly attachments. Indeed, the whole tone of his discourse, and the constant tenor of his life, evinced his detachment, not only from pomps and riches and delicacies, but from what are usually esteemed to be common comforts and necessities. To his judgment the middle condition of life best approved itself. "Better to be in the midst," were his words, "between the two pointed rocks of deep penury and high prosperity, than to be on the sharps of either." But his choice, to quote his own emphatic expression, was to choose nothing, and he left it to a better wisdom than his own to carve out his earthly lot. "If we are born to worldly greatnesses, let us even take them, and endeavor to make friends with them who shall stand us in good stead, when we are put out of our stewardship: but to desire that our journey should be by the troublesome and dangerous road of worldly prosperity, is a mighty folly." He was pleased with an ingenious similitude of Dr. Sale's, who compares the good things of this life to mushrooms, which need so many precautions in eating, that wholly to waive the dish is the safest wisdom.

"To corporal indulgences none was ever more indifferent. In-



deed he practised a rigorous abstemiousness, keeping three fasts in the week, and one of them always on the Sunday ; not from a superstitious esteem of the bodily penance, but in order to make the soul light and active for the enjoyment of that sacred festival. His nephew thinks that he injured his health by excessive abstinence : but his own maxim was, "that little eating, and little speaking, do no one any harm : " "One thing forborne," he said, "is better than twenty things taken." He thought people in general much too expensive and curious in the preparation of their meals, and wished this domestic profusion were turned into a channel of distribution to the poor. Every thing beyond the mere necessities of life he termed the overflowings of a full cup, which ought not to run to waste, but descend into the poor man's platter. The gratifications of bodily appetite would not, he was persuaded, be so much reckoned on, if professed Christians had more "spiritual sensuality," as he often termed that ardent relish, which is the characteristic of rectified souls, for the meat and drink, the hidden manna, of God's immortal banquet.

"He used to compare a man's station in life to an imprisonment, and observed, that, "although it is becoming to keep the place of our confinement clean and neat, it were ill done to build upon it." His sister thinking he carried his indifference to earthly things too far, and that his munificence required some check, said to him once, "If you had a wife and children you must not act thus." His answer was, "I know not how it would be, but I know how it should be. 'Enoch walked with God ;—and begat sons and daughters.'"

"In truth, his liberality was boundless. All he received was distributed to the poor, except the bare pittance which his necessities imperiously demanded for himself. Unwilling, however, to gain any credit for beneficence, he commonly dispensed his bounty through the hands of others, as we learn from Burnet, who officiated as his almoner in London.

"In exemplification of his humane and amiable condescension to his friends and dependents, there is an anecdote, which will not disgrace our pages. He once had a Roman Catholic servant, who made a point of abstaining from flesh on the fast days prescribed by the Romish calendar. Leighton, being apprized of this by Mrs. Lightmaker, commented on the vanity of such scruples, yet requested her to indulge the poor man with such fare as suited his erroneous piety, lest the endeavor to dissuade him from the practice should drive him to falsehood or prevarication. "For to this," he added, "many poor creatures are

impelled, not so much from a corrupt inclination, as for want of a handsome truth." So gentle was he in his construction of the faults and foibles of others.

"It is of little moment to ascertain, even were it possible, whether this be the identical man-servant, whose idle pranks have earned him a never-dying fame in Dunblane and its neighborhood. The following story may be taken as a sample of the provocations, with which this thoughtless fellow used to try his master's equanimity. Having a fancy one morning for the diversion of fishing, he locked the door of the house and carried off the key, leaving his master imprisoned. He was too much engrossed with his sport to think of returning till the evening, when the only admonition he received for his gross behavior from the meek bishop, was, "John, when you next go a fishing, remember to leave the key in the door."

"The whole history of Leighton's life proclaims his abhorrence of persecution. It is related that his sister once asked him, at the request of a friend, what he thought was the mark of the Beast; at the same time adding; "I told the inquirer that you would certainly answer you could not tell." "Truly you said well," replied Leighton; "but, if I might fancy what it were, it would be something with a pair of horns that pusheth his neighbor, and hath been so much seen and practised in church and state." He also passed a severe sentence on the Romanists, "who, in their zeal for making proselytes, fetched ladders from hell to scale heaven:" and he deeply lamented, that men of the reformed church should have given in to similar measures.

"We have seen, in the narrative of his public conduct, how firmly he withstood the severe measures set afoot to produce an uniformity of worship in Scotland. Swords and halberts, tongs and pincers, were very unfit instruments, in his esteem, for advancing the science and practice of religion. "The scripture tells us, indeed, of plucking out a right eye for the preservation of the whole body; but if that eye admit of a cure, it should rather be preserved; only let its cure be committed to the dexterous hands of the kindest oculist, and not to a mere bungler, who would mar instead of healing. For himself he would suffer any thing, rather than touch a hair of the head of those, who labored under such pitiable maladies. as errors in faith must be accounted. Or, if he did meddle with them, it should be with such a gentle touch, as would prove the friendliness of his disposition and purpose." "I prefer," he has been heard to say, "an erroneous honest man before the most orthodox knave in

the world ; and I would rather convince a man that he has a soul to save, and induce him to live up to that belief, than bring him over to my opinion in whatsoever else beside. Would to God that men were but as holy as they might be in the worst of forms now among us ! Let us press them to be holy, and miscarry if they can." Being told of a person who had changed his persuasion, all he said was, "Is he more meek ; more dead to the world ? If so, he has made a happy change."

"It is related of him, that going one day to visit a leading minister of the presbytery, he found him discoursing to his company on the duties of a holy life. Leighton, instead of turning off to the subject of the current reasons for non-conformity, though he had gone for the express purpose of discussing them, instantly fell in with the train of conversation, and concluded his visit without attempting to change it. To some of his friends who remonstrated with him on this apparent oversight, "Nay," he replied, "the good man and I were in the main agreed ; and for the points in which we differ, they are mostly unimportant ; and though they be of moment, it is advisable before pressing any, to win as many volunteers as we can."

"This feature of his character is further illustrated by an anecdote, which there is every reason to believe authentic. A friend calling upon him one day, and not meeting him at home, learnt, on inquiry, that he was gone to visit a sick presbyterian minister, on a horse which he had borrowed of the catholic priest.

"His sobriety of mind and soundness of judgment ought not to be passed over in silence. These qualities were conspicuous in his never pretending to develope the secret things of God, notwithstanding the variety of his learning and his talent for high speculation. Instead of hazarding a guess on a difficult point, to which he had been requested to turn his thoughts, he said to the inquirer, on meeting him some time afterwards, "I have not yet got the lesson you set me." And to his nephew, who complained that there was a certain text of scripture which he could not understand, his answer was, "And many more that I cannot." In reverently standing aloof from those mysteries of the divine nature and government, which are enshrined in a light no mortal eye can gaze upon undazzled, he discovered a judgment equal to his modesty, and exemplified the saying of Solomon, that "with the lowly is wisdom." Being once interrogated about the saints reigning with Christ, he tried to elude the question by merely replying, "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." Pressed, however, to give his opinion, whether or not



the saints would exercise rule in the earth, although Christ should not in person assume the sovereignty, he answered with exquisite judgment, "If God hath appointed any such thing for us, he will give us heads to bear such liquor : our preferment shall not make us reel." Prying into matters of this nature, which the spirit of God has apparently sealed up from man's inquisitiveness, was, in his estimation, indecent and dangerous ; and he thought that passionate curiosity, which overleaps the boundaries of revelation, might be well rebuked by the angel's answer to Manoah ; "Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" "Enough," he said, "is discovered to satisfy us, that righteousness and judgment are within, although round about his throne are clouds and darkness:" and he blamed those, "who boldly venture into the very thick darkness and deepest recesses of the divine majesty." "That prospect of election and predestination," said he, "is a great abyss, into which I choose to sink, rather than attempt to sound it. And truly any attempt at throwing light upon it makes it only a greater abyss, and is a piece of blameable presumption. In conformity with these sound views, he always endeavored, when Principal of the University of Edinburgh, to repress such perilous inquiries ; judging them of a nature to make young students conceited, disputatious, and sceptical, and to lead them away from the love of truth and the practice of piety.

"We learn from Burnet, that "his thoughts were lively, oft out of the way and surprising, yet just and genuine;" and several of his sayings might be adduced to justify this praise, and to show him well read in the science of human nature and its management. It was an aphorism of his, that "One half of the world lives upon the madness of the other." He was no advocate in general for crude and abrupt exposures of unpalatable truths. Being told of an author, who had entitled his performance, "Naked truth whipt and stript," his remark was, "It might have been better to clothe it:" and he saw nothing praiseworthy in the roughness, misnamed honesty, of some people, "who would rather overturn the boat than trim it." I shall only add, in illustration of this point of his character, a prayer which he used to offer up, which is pregnant with melancholy meaning : "Deliver me, O Lord, from the errors of wise men ; yea, and of good men."

"Of his humility, that grace so lovely in the eyes of heaven, and which was truly his crowning grace, it would be difficult to take the dimensions. Burnet mentions "that he seemed to have the lowest thoughts of himself possible, and to desire that all other

persons should think as meanly of him, as he did of himself; and he bore all sorts of ill usage and reproach, like a man that took pleasure in it."

"This character of his mind is finely illustrated in the following passage from one of his letters.

"And now I have begun, I would end just here; for I have nothing to say, nothing of affairs (to be sure) private nor public; and to strike up to discourses of devotion, alas! what is there to be said, but what you sufficiently know, and daily read, and daily think, and, I am confident, daily endeavor to do? And I am beaten back, if I had a great mind to speak of such things, by the sense of so great deficiency, in doing those things that the most ignorant among Christians cannot choose but know. Instead of all fine notions, I fly to *Κυριε ελεησον Χριστε ελεησον*;\* I think them the great heroes and excellent persons of the world, that attain to high degrees of pure contemplation and divine love; but next to those, them that in aspiring to that and falling short of it, fall down into deep humility, and self-contempt, and a real desire to be despised and trampled on by all the world. And I believe that they that sink lowest into that depth, stand nearest to advancement to those other heights: for the great King who is the fountain of that honor, hath given us this character of himself, that He resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. Farewell, my dear friend, and be so charitable as sometimes in your addresses upwards, to remember a poor caitiff, who no day forgets you.

13th December, 1676.

R. L.

"On the eve of taking a bishopric, when he perceived how many obstacles there were to his doing the good he wished to others, "Yet one benefit at least," said he, "will arise from it; I shall break that little idol of estimation my friends have for me, and which I have been so long sick of." Though he could not be ignorant of the value set on his pulpit discourses by the public,—for never was a wandering eye seen when he preached, but the whole congregation would often melt into tears before him,—yet the most urgent entreaties of his friends could never obtain from him the publication of a single sermon. Indeed, he looked upon himself as so ordinary a preacher, and so unlikely to do good, that he was always for giving up his place to other ministers; and after he became a bishop, he always preferred preach-

\* Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy.

ing to small congregations, and would never give notice beforehand when he was to fill the pulpit. Of a piece with his rooted dislike to any thing, that seemed to imply consequence in himself, was his strong objection to have his portrait taken. When it was requested of him, he testified unusual displeasure, and said, "If you will have my likeness, draw it with charcoal:" meaning, no doubt, that he was *carbone notandus*, as justly obnoxious to scorn and condemnation. His picture was, however, clandestinely taken when he was about the middle age; and as the engravings prefixed to his works are copied from it, it is a pleasure to know from such good authority as his nephew's letter, that it greatly resembled him.

"Nature had endowed him with a warm and affectionate disposition, which was not extinguished by his superlative love to God, though it was always kept in due subordination. In his commentary on the epistle of Peter he remarks, that "our only safest way is to gird up our affections wholly;" and he lived up to this principle. Accordingly, after avowing once, how partial he was to the amiable character and fine accomplishments of a relation, he added, "Nevertheless I can readily wean myself from him, if I cannot persuade him to become wise and good; *Sine bonitate nulla majestas, nullos sapor.*" To him, as to that Holy One of whose spirit he partook largely, whoever did the will of his heavenly Father were more than natural kindred. Such, therefore, of his relations as were Christians indeed, had a double share of his tenderness; and to the strength of this twofold bond, not less than to his heavenly-mindedness, we may ascribe his exclamation on returning from the grave, in which his brother-in-law had been interred: "Fain would I have thrown myself in with him." A beautiful extract from a letter, which he wrote to that gentleman on the death of a particularly sweet and promising child, to whom he himself was tenderly attached, may here find a suitable place.

"I am glad of your health and recovery of your little ones; but indeed it was a sharp stroke of a pen, that told me your pretty Johnny was dead; and I felt it truly more than, to my remembrance, I did the death of any child in my lifetime. Sweet thing, and is he so quickly laid to sleep? Happy he! Though we shall have no more the pleasure of his lisping and laughing, he shall have no more the pain of crying, nor of being sick, nor of dying; and hath wholly escaped the trouble of schooling, and all other sufferings of boys, and the riper and deeper griefs of riper



years, this poor life being all along nothing but a linked chain of many sorrows and many deaths. Tell my dear sister she is now much more akin to the other world ; and this will quickly be passed to us all. John is but gone an hour or two sooner to bed, as children use to do, and we are undressing to follow. And the more we put off the love of this present world and all things superfluous, beforehand, we shall have the less to do, when we lie down. It shall refresh me to hear from you at your leisure.

Sir,

Your affectionate brother,

*Edinbro', Jan. 16th.*

R. LEIGHTON.

"Leighton was a great admirer of rural scenery ; and, in his rides upon the Sussex downs, he often descanted, with sublime fervor, on the marvellous works of the almighty Architect. Adverting to the boundless varieties of creation, he remarked, that there is no wonder after a straw, omnipotence being as necessary to make the least things out of nothing as the greatest. But his lofty mind seemed especially to delight in soaring to the celestial firmament, and expatiating through those stupendous vaults, from which so many glorious lamps are hung out, on purpose, he believed, to attract our thoughts to the glory that excelleth ; and "we miss the chief benefit they are meant to render us, if we use them not to light us up to heaven." "It was a long hand," he would exclaim, "and a strong hand too, that stretched out this stately canopy above us ; and to him whose work it is we may rightly ascribe most excellent majesty." After some such expressions of devout amazement, he would sink into silent and adoring centemplation.

"We have seen that his walk was direct to heaven, and the drift of his conversation habitually unearthly. He died daily by the mortification of his natural appetites and affections ; and he was visibly perfect in that frame of mind, which he wondered should not be universal, "in which every second thought is of death." It was not in a melancholy tone that he touched on this serious subject ; for the illusions spread over earthly things had long since faded away from his eyes, which were fixed in the sublime anticipations of faith on those blissful realities, that shall open upon the redeemed of the Lord, when they have shaken off mortality. To him, therefore, death had lost its sting ; it was become a pleasant theme ; and gave occasion to some of his most cheerful sayings. He would compare this heavy clod of clay, with which the soul is encumbered, to the miry boots, of which

the traveller gladly divests himself on finishing his journey : and he could not disguise his own wish to be speedily unclothed, instead of lingering below till his garments were worn out and dropped off through age. In general, his temper was serene rather than gay ; but his nephew states, that if ever it rose to an unusual pitch of vivacity, it was when some illness attacked him ; —when, “ from the shaking of the prison doors, he was led to hope, that some of those brisk blasts would throw them open, and give him the release he coveted.” Then he seemed to stand tiptoe on the margin of eternity, in a delightful amazement of spirit, eagerly awaiting the summons to depart, and feeding his soul with the prospect of immortal life and glory. Sometimes, while contemplating his future resting-place, he would break out into that noble apostrophe of pious George Herbert ;

O let me roost and nestle there ;  
Then of a sinner thou art rid,  
And I of hope and fear.

“Hearing once of the death of a portly man ; “How is it,” he exclaimed, “that A——— has broke through those goodly brick walls, while I am kept in by a bit of flimsy deal?” He would say pleasantly, that he had his night-cap on, and rejoiced that it was so near bed-time, or, rather, so near the hour of rising to one who had long lain awake in the dark ; and pointing to the children of the family, one evening, who were showing symptoms of weariness, and importuning to be undressed ; “Shall I,” said he, “who am threescore and ten, be loth to go to bed?” This world he considered a state of nonage, and the land of mature men a land very far off. No apophthegm of uninspired wisdom pleased him more than that of Seneca : “*Ille dies, quam ut supremam metuisses, æternitatis natalis est.*” \* His alacrity to depart resulted from his earnest desire to “see and enjoy perfection in the perfect sense of it, which he could not do and live.” “That consummation,” he would say, “is truly a hope deferred ; but, when it cometh, it will be a tree of life.”

“An extract from a letter, supposed to have been written a short time before his death, may here be aptly inserted.

“I find daily more and more reason without me, and within me yet much more, to pant and long to be gone. I am grown exceeding uneasy in writing and speaking, yea almost in thinking, when I reflect how cloudy our clearest thoughts are : but, I think again what other can we do, till the day break and the shadows flee away, as one that lieth awake in the night must be

\* The day which you fear as your last, is the BIRTH DAY OF ETERNITY.

thinking; and one thought that will likely oftenest return, when by all other thoughts he finds little relief, is, *when will it be day?*"

"Yet Leighton, for the comfort of weak believers be it recorded, did not pretend to an absolute assurance of final salvation. Conversing, one day, in his wonted strain of holy animation, of the blessedness of being fixed as a pillar in the heavenly Jerusalem to go no more out,\* he was interrupted by a near relation exclaiming, "Ah, but you have assurance!" "No, truly," he replied, "only a good hope, and a great desire to see what they are doing on the other side, for of this world I am heartily weary."

"Such was the holy man, of whom little now remains to be told, except his dismissal from this troublesome scene to that place among

———the sanctities of heaven,

which he had long preoccupied in affection and spirit."

In the year 1684, Leighton received an earnest request from Bishop Burnet, to visit Lord Perth, once apparently a good man, but now a very wicked one, who had begun to feel compunction for his crimes, and desired to see Leighton. "I hoped, says Burnet, that still some good impressions had been left in him: and now, when he came to London to be made lord chancellor, I had a very earnest message from him, desiring by my means to see Leighton. I thought that angelical man might have awakened in him some of those good principles, which he seemed once to have had, and which were now totally extinguished in him. I writ so earnestly to Leighton that he came to London." Though his appearance was healthy, yet his biographer says that he went with feelings of illness, which may account for his presentiment that his dissolution was at hand. "The worse I am," said he in the ardor of his benevolence "the more I choose to go, that I may give one pull at you poor brother, and snatch him if possible from the infectious air of the court."—"Upon his coming to me," Burnet continues, "I was amazed to see him at above seventy look so fresh and well, that age as it were seemed to stand still with him; his hair was still black, and all his motions were lively. He had the same quickness of thought and strength of memory, but above all, the same heat and life of devotion, that I had ever seen in him. When I took notice to him, upon my first seeing him, how well he looked, he told me he was very near his end for all

\* Rev. iii. 12.



that; and his work and journey both were now almost done. This at that time made no great impression on me."

"The very next day," says his biographer, "he was attacked with an oppression on the chest, and with cold and stitches, which proved to be the commencement of a pleurisy. He sunk rapidly, for on the following day both speech and sense had left him; and, after panting for about twelve hours, he expired without a struggle in the arms of Bishop Burnet, his intimate friend, his ardent and affectionate admirer. Nothing is recorded of his last hours: and indeed the disease that carried him off was such, by its nature and rapid progress, as to preclude much speaking. But no record is necessary of the dying moments of a man, who had served God from his infancy; and whose path had been a shining light up to the moment when the shades of death closed over it. God was, assuredly, the strength of his heart in the hour of his last agony, and is now his glorious portion, his exceeding and eternal great reward. It was needless for himself that he should have notice of the bridegroom's coming; for his lamp was always trimmed, his loins were always girded. To his surviving friends it could have afforded little additional satisfaction, to have heard him express, on his death-bed, that faith and holy hope, of which his life had been one unbroken example: neither could he have left, for the benefit of posterity, any sayings more suitable to a dying believer than those he daily uttered; living, as he had long lived, on the confines of the eternal world, and in the highest frame of spirituality that it seems possible for an embodied soul to attain. He entered into his rest, on the 25th of June, A. D. 1684, in the seventy-fourth year of his age."

"I was by him," writes Bishop Burnet, "all the while. Thus I lost him, who had been the chief guide of my whole life. He had lived ten years in Sussex, in great privacy, dividing his time wholly between study and retirement, and the doing of good: for in the parish where he lived, and in the parishes round about, he was always employed in preaching and reading prayers. He distributed all he had in charities, choosing rather to have it go through other people's hands than his own: for I was his almoner in London. He had gathered a well chosen library of curious as well as useful books; which he left to the diocese of Dunblane, for the use of the clergy there, that country being ill provided with books.

"There were two remarkable circumstances in his death. He used often to say, that if he were to choose a place to die in it should be an inn, it looking like a pilgrim's going home, to

whom this world was all as an inn, and who was weary of the noise and confusion in it. He added, that the officious tenderness and care of friends was an entanglement to a dying man; and that the unconcerned attendance of those that could be procured in such a place would give less disturbance. And he obtained what he desired; for he died at the Bell inn, in Warwick Lane. Another circumstance was, that while he was bishop in Scotland, he took what his tenants were pleased to pay him: so that there was a great arrear due, which was raised slowly by one whom he left in trust with his affairs there: and the last payment that he could expect from thence was returned up to him about six weeks before his death: so that his provision and his journey failed both at once."

In addition to what has already been selected from Burnet's history of his own times, the following passages are full of interest.

"I bear still the greatest veneration for the memory of that man that I do for any person; and reckon my early knowledge of him, and my long and intimate conversation with him, that continued to his death for twenty-three years, among the greatest blessings of my life; and for which I know I must give account to God, in the great day, in a most particular manner."

"He was accounted a saint from his youth up. He had great quickness of parts, a lively apprehension, with a charming vivacity of thought and expression. He had the greatest command of the purest Latin that ever I knew in any man. He was a master both of Greek and Hebrew, and of the whole compass of theological learning, chiefly in the study of the scriptures. But that which excelled all the rest was, he was possessed with the highest and noblest sense of divine things that I ever saw in any man. He had no regard to his person, unless it was to mortify it by a constant low diet, that was like a perpetual fast. He had a contempt both of wealth and reputation. He seemed to have the lowest thoughts of himself possible, and to desire that all other persons should think as meanly of him as he did of himself: he bore all sorts of ill usage and reproach like a man that took pleasure in it. He had so subdued the natural heat of his temper, that in a great variety of accidents, and in a course of twenty-two years' intimate conversation with him, I never observed the least sign of passion, but upon one single occasion. He brought himself into so composed a gravity, that I never saw him laugh, and but seldom smile. And he kept himself in such a constant recollection, that I do not remember that ever I heard

him say one idle word. There was a visible tendency in all he said, to raise his own mind, and those he conversed with, to serious reflections. He seemed to be in a perpetual meditation. And though the whole course of his life was strict and ascetical, yet he had nothing of the sourness of temper that generally possesses men of that sort. He was the freest from superstition, from censuring others, or imposing his own methods on them, possible. So that he did not so much as recommend them to others. He said there was a diversity of tempers, and every man was to watch over his own, and to turn it in the best manner he could. His thoughts were lively, oft out of the way and surprising, yet just and genuine. And he had laid together in his memory the greatest treasure of the best and wisest of all the ancient sayings of the heathens as well as Christians, that I have ever known any man master of : and he used them in the aptest manner possible."

Speaking of the bishops of Scotland, and referring particularly to Archbishop Leighton, Burnet says in the preface to his life of Bedell, "I have observed among the few of them to whom I had the honor to be known particularly, as great and exemplary things as ever I met with in all ecclesiastical history ; not only the practice of the strictest of all the ancient canons, but a pitch of virtue and piety, beyond what can fall under common imitation, or be made the measure of even the most angelical rank of men; and saw things in them that look more like fair ideas, than what men clothed with flesh and blood could grow up to."

In his treatise on the duties of the Pastoral care, "I was formed to them," he says, "by a bishop that had the greatest elevation of soul, the largest compass of knowledge, the most mortified and most heavenly disposition, that I ever yet saw in mortal ; that had the greatest parts, as well as virtues, with the perfectest humility, that I ever saw in man ; and had a sublime strain in preaching, with so grave a gesture, and such a majesty, both of thought, of language, and of pronunciation, that I never once saw a wandering eye where he preached ; and have seen whole assemblies often melt in tears before him ; and of whom I can say with great truth, that in a free and frequent conversation with him, for above two-and-twenty years, I never knew him say an idle word, that had not a direct tendency to edification : and I never once saw him in any other temper, but that which I wished to be in, in the last moments of my life. For that pattern, which I saw in him, and for that conversation, which I had with him, I know how much I have to answer to God : and though my re-



flecting on that which I knew in him, gives me just cause of being deeply humbled in myself, and before God; yet I feel no more sensible pleasure in any thing than in going over in my thoughts all I saw and observed in him."

ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON had many and worthy contemporaries, lights of preeminent lustre in the church, men of powerful minds, deep learning, and faithful devotedness to Christ. It was an age fruitfully productive of intellectual and moral greatness. It was an age for the discovery and ripening of great truths, and one in which great principles were practically tested and established. It was an age of immense erudition in Law, Philosophy, and Divinity. It was an age of masterly practical Theology; but above all, it was an age abundant in examples of eminent holiness.

A mere list of the names of some of the most eminent men who then flourished leaves a vivid impression of intellect and religion on the mind. LEIGHTON, USHER, STILLINGFLEET, CHILLINGWORTH, LIGHTFOOT, HALL, TAYLOR, TILLOTSON, HAMMOND, PRIDEAUX, BATES, BAXTER, HOWE, CALAMY, REYNOLDS, HENRY, OWEN, CUDWORTH, WALLIS, WALTON, WILKINS, MILTON, SELDEN, HALE, POOLE, MANTON, JACOMB, RUTHERFORD, CHARTERIS, NAIRN, GILPIN, CHARNOCK, SHAW, FLAVEL, MEAD, POCOCK, BOYLE, BARROW, BULL, WHITBY, NEWTON, PATRICK, LOCKE. These are some of the eminent scholars, divines, and holy men of old, who flourished from the beginning to the close of the seventeenth Century. Many of them are a host individually. Their mingled talents, learning, and piety made that age the brightest in all English literature. Star rose after star, in such beautiful succession, as to make one continuous Galaxy of intellectual and moral light. Calamy's lives of the Nonconformists, the first volume especially, is full of striking portraits of men whose learning was of gigantic aspect, and whose holiness would have adorned the age of primitive, apostolic piety. It is a continued record of men *in labors abundant, in stripes above measure*. Men, who made life religion, and stamped fleeting time with the impress of Eternity. Neither the persecution of enemies, nor the rage of the elements, could keep them from their duty. When the plague ravaged London, and ministers who feared death more than God fled from the pulpits, they bade defiance to the pestilence, and ministered the bread of life to pale multitudes, at altars from which they would have been driven with penal inflictions in the season of health.

Yet Leighton outshone them all. Few men, even in the age

of USHER, SELDEN, and MILTON, possessed such comprehensive erudition; and since the days of the Apostles there has scarce been witnessed another so perfect imitation of the life of Christ. A simple repetition of the beatitudes, with which our Divine Saviour opened his Sermon on the Mount, would perhaps be the most forcible and happy delineation of his moral character. He possessed all the features, there drawn in such expressive lines, in a degree so eminent, that any one alone would have rendered his Christian character conspicuous for its excellence. And such a heavenly harmony reigned over them all, that no one grew bright at the expense of the others. In this sense he was a finished Christian. There was a holy symmetry and proportion in the graces which adorned his life. They assembled together and blended with each other in such sweet and perfect unison, each occupying its own place, no one absent, no one faintly discerned, that when we think of him, we think of him as 'The Holy Leighton,' and cannot but feel that no other appellation whatever would be equally appropriate to his character. We may speak of the ardent Baxter, the contrite Brainard, the beloved, self-denying Martyn, the humble, patient, confiding, persevering Schwartz; but to denominate Leighton's piety in like manner from any peculiar grace, would seem like designating the beauty of the rainbow by one of its primary colors. He seems almost to have arrived at the highest degree of spirituality, which it is possible for any human being to attain.

If any one of the Christian graces did shine the brightest, it was that of humility. "A self-searching Christian," he would say, "is made up of humility and meekness. If thou wouldest find much peace and favor with God and man, be very low in thine own eyes. *Forgive thyself little, and others much.*" "The poor in spirit—they that mourn—the meek, &c. Oh sweet, lowly graces, *poverty of spirit, meekness*, that grow low, and are of dark hue, as the violets, but of a fragrant smell; these are prime in the garlands of a Christian. Oh study these; seek to have them growing within you." The very shining of the Christian graces, he thought, ought to be with humility. "Shine humbly, to his glory, whose light you borrow; not to show forth your own excellencies, but His, *who hath called you from darkness to his marvellous light. Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, (not yourselves, if you can be hid; as the sun affords its light, and will scarce suffer us to look upon itself,) may glorify (not you, but) your heavenly Father.*"—"Oh Jesus, my Saviour! thy blessed humility, impress it on my

heart." He called humility the preserver of all the other graces, which "without it, if they could be without it, were but as a box of precious powder, carried in the wind without a cover, in danger of being scattered and blown away." And he said beautifully—that "the embroidery, the variety of graces, the lively colors of other graces, shine best on the dark ground of humility." It was his humility, looking to the examples of John the Baptist, and of a greater than he, which kept him from the ministry till after he was thirty years of age. "Good fruit," he said, "may be plucked too green, which, let alone awhile to ripen, would prove much more pleasant and profitable."

It was his eminent humility which made him eminently wise; and it was his humility and wisdom combined, which formed him to such childlike acquiescence in the will, and simple deference to the word, of God. *Thus hath the Lord been pleased*, was to him a sufficient solution of any mystery—it was a delightful reason. Like a little child, whose hand is safely held in the hand of its father, he walked about, admiring with confiding, unquestioning simplicity the movements which he could not understand. "What questions are moved," said he, "more curious than useful, I shall either pass wholly in silence, or only name them to pass them, to put them out of our way, that they may not stop us in what may be useful."—"This is *arcanum imperii, a state secret*," says he on one occasion, speaking of the counsels of God: "no reason is to be expected, but his good pleasure." He thought some mysteries were rather humbly to be adored than boldly to be explained. "Here it were easier," he says, with inimitable beauty, of such a mystery, "to lead you into a deep, than to lead you forth again. *I will rather stand on the shore, and silently admire it, than enter into it.*"—He could not endure that any should attempt "to cut and square God's thoughts to ours, and examine his sovereign purposes by the low principles of human wisdom.\* How much more learned than all such knowledge, is the Apostle's ignorance, when he cries out, *O! the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*"

\* A kindred spirit of reverence to the word and purposes of God abode in the bosoms of many of the great Scholars and Divines of that period. The learned SELDEN, in his book on *Tithes*, speaking of the great riches of the tribe of Levi, makes this energetic remark. "I trust in this; that it pleased the Almighty so to enrich that tribe which was reserved only for the holy service in the temple. Why he did so, or with what proportion, let them for me examine, who dare put their profane fancies to play with his holy text, and so most impudently and wickedly offer to square the one by the other."—What would Selden have said, had he come across some of the speculations of modern Unitarianism in regard to the Old Testament!



The same humility of soul inspired him with a reverential deference to all the appointed ordinances of God. Speaking of our Saviour submitting to be baptized by John,—“He humbles himself,” said he, “to be baptized. Oh that we who are baptized had more of his likeness in this humble reverence for divine ordinances, looking on them as his in every warranted hand. What though he that teaches be less knowing and less spiritual than thou that hearest, one that might rather learn of thee, yet the appointment of God obliges them to attend as humbly and regardfully to his ministry as if he were an angel.”

He loved to mourn over his sins. “Who would not be content to weep,” said he, “to have God wipe away their tears with his own hand.”—Speaking of the loveliness of Jesus in comparison with all that worldly men love, “their enjoyments, he said, have not near so much sweetness, as the very seekings and mournings after Jesus Christ.”

In charity and liberality of mind, in kindness, gentleness, and tenderness of heart and manners, perhaps he never had an equal. There was no such thing as prejudice in his bosom; he never judged another man’s conscience; the persecution and religious intolerance of the times distressed him very deeply. *The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all.* Truly he was so; the example of Jesus was reflected brightly in the life of this eminent saint, from those quiet graces especially, which are most unlike the spirit of this selfish, troubled world, but which soften, subdue, and win, wherever they are witnessed. For the world he would not have grieved a single human heart, or wounded the feelings of the weakest of his brethren in Christ. In the simple language of the Apostle, he was *kind, tender-hearted, forgiving;—walking in love, as Christ also hath loved us.* Never was there a sweeter exhibition of the pure spirit of heavenly kindness, save in the life of Him who knew no sin. He would not have handled a rosebud too roughly; a terrified bird would have flown to his bosom. *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.* Such patience, such meekness, such compassion, such winning, affectionate mildness, never could have grown up or flourished, but beneath the sweet serene breathings of the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier

That a saint so constituted was a discreet and tender counselor to individuals distressed with religious doubts and perplexities; that he was not only perfectly free from censoriousness, but kind and gentle in weighing the faults of others, and patient towards the infirmities of his fellow Christians, we need not say.

"They that have most of this wisdom," said he, "are least rigid to those that have less of it. I know no better evidence of strength in grace, than to bear much with those that are weak in it." He was indeed all tenderness to others, though severe to himself; giving life and reality to his own beautiful maxim, he "forgave himself little, and others much."—"A man, though he err," said he, "if he do it calmly and meekly, may be a better man than he who is stormy and furiously orthodox."—"Next to the grave and the silent shades of death, a cottage in some wilderness is to be wished for, to mourn for the pride and passion of mankind."—He loved to practise what he pleasantly calls "that sweet doctrine of not revenging, but patiently bearing, and readily forgiving of injuries, and loving enemies, and doing good to all."—"Humility, meekness and charity were the darling virtues of Christ. He came to expiate and to extirpate our pride; and when that majesty did so humble himself, shall a worm swell?"—He has somewhere said, "he that in prayer minds none but himself, doubtless he is not right in minding himself."

What was his own probable practice in the attainment of the Christian graces, may be learned from his own recommendation to others, "to be more particular in our purposes; sometimes to set ourselves to some one grace, not secluding nor turning away the rest, for that cannot be, but yet, more particularly plying that one, were it *humility, poverty of spirit, meekness*, or any other; and for some time to make that one our main task, were it for some weeks or months together, and examine every day's practice in that particularly. But, like unsettled students among many books, we rove and reel, and make offers at every grace, and still lag behind and make no considerable purchase nor progression in any."

His piety was eminently a meditative piety. Early in life he had been much impressed with some examples of secluded holiness at Donay; his own habits could not have been more unworldly, had he spent his whole existence in the gloom and seclusion of the cloister; but he mingled meditation with activity. That is a beautiful image, which Young uses of the Christian;

Like ship at sea, while in, above the world.

Whether in the midst of this world's scenes, or in perfect retirement, Leighton's thoughts were always fixed upon the world whither he was tending. Religious meditation seemed the involuntary habit of his soul; and in this was exemplified the profound truth of his own remark, that "the pure love of God maketh the spirit

pure and simple, and so free, that without any pain and labor it can at all times turn and recollect itself in God." If duty drew him from seclusion, it was to watch and pray lest he should enter into temptation; and amidst the most absorbing earthly business, if his thoughtful face were of a clear transparency, and you could have looked through the casement of his soul far into the depths of its retirement, you would there have seen the high purposes of God still ripening and fulfilling, and the process of growing holiness advancing as certainly and uninterruptedly as it would in the most sacred oratory of private devotion. He thought that in this world the Christian's white robe would be very likely to be entangled and defiled, if he wore it too flowingly:—

He would not soil those pure ambrosial weeds  
With the rank vapors of this sin-worn mould.

"Our only safest way," said he, "is to gird up our affections wholly. When we come to the place of our rest, we may wear our long white robes at full length without disturbance; for no unclean thing is there; yea, the streets of that New Jerusalem are paved with gold."

He was a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth, and he felt that he was such. He had no more motive to partake in the toils and anxieties of this life, than an angel would feel, commissioned on some errand of mercy to the dwelling-place of mortals, who stays only till he may perform the mandate of his sovereign, and is glad to return from the atmosphere of earth to the light of his Father's countenance, to his home of glory in the skies. Though present in the body, he was absent in the spirit with his Lord and Master. Amidst his fellow-mortals in all the concerns of this life he walked and acted like a man in a dream—a dream, from which he was then only to awake, when he passed into the blissful presence of his ascended Saviour. *I shall be satisfied, WHEN I AWAKE, with thy likeness.* And though into all the business which duty required of him, he entered with a grave intensity to fulfil the Apostle's injunction, yet all this while his soul was conversing in heaven, for he looked with the eye of faith on the things unseen and eternal. In the emphatic words of Paul, he was dead, and his life was hid with Christ in God. He was altogether Christ's; His image was always before him; His words always invited him to glory.

I hear a voice, you cannot hear,  
Forbidding me to stay;  
I see a hand, you cannot see,  
Which beckons me away.



He thought nothing, desired nothing, did nothing, with which the idea of his Redeemer was not connected. His conversation was like that of Moses and Elias on the mount of transfiguration; or like what we might suppose one of the spirits of the just made perfect would exhibit, if he returned to dwell again for a short period among the inhabitants of earth. With what sweetness, what delicacy, he was accustomed perpetually to recur to the themes nearest and dearest to his heart, progression in holiness, the rest of the saints, the hour of his departure, the things which eye hath not seen, awaiting him in Eternity. Jesus, dwelling in his heart by faith, and formed within him, the hope of glory. "When," said he, "will the day break, and the shadows flee away?" "It is not," he would say, "the want of religious houses, but of spiritual hearts, that glues the wing of our affections, and hinders the more frequent practice of this leading precept of the divine law,—fervently to lift up our souls unto God, and to have our conversation in heaven." There cannot be a doubt that his rules and instructions for a holy life are a transcript from his own experience. It would be impossible for any but a very holy man to rise even to the imagination of a life so celestial, or to compose in such a flowing strain of angelical devotion to God. These rules are a mild still voice from the innermost holy of holies in a heart where God reigns supremely and alone. Sometimes in memorials of this nature there is a repulsive coldness and austerity; here, as in the character of which these instructions are a portrait, the sanctity delineated is attractive, gentle, serene. It is a pure streamlet which has found its way into a world of sin, from the river of the water of life clear as chrysal. It breathes a divine fragrantcy and carries the soul silently up to rest in its contemplations at the throne of God and the Lamb.

Leighton's religious character, though so very retired and contemplative, was cheerful and happy. How could it be otherwise with one who lived in so holy a manner, that he was always longing to depart and to be with Christ. The study of his writings tends to inspire a calm confidence in God, and a holy joyfulness in the contemplation of Jesus and religious things. He speaks very often of the happiness and privileges of the children of God with a humble holy exultation, and even with a playfulfulness of delight. He takes a childlike pride in simplicity of heart in showing the roll in his bosom, and the robe his Father has given him to wear. He triumphs in the sweetest manner in the consciousness of his security in Jesus, and of the unalterable

tendency of his soul, through the power of redeeming grace, towards Heaven, his happy home. "Courage, brothers;" he would say, "the day is coming!" His language is the very exuberance of a soul satisfied with every dispensation and delighting in God. It is impossible to read many pages of his works without feeling, that notwithstanding his grief for the desolations and divisions of Zion, and his mournful sense of his own unworthiness, indwelling sin, and want of perfect love, he must have been one of the happiest saints who ever lived. He pours forth image after image expressive of the grateful contentedness of the Christian with the will of his Heavenly Father. The kingdom of Heaven was within him, and he enjoyed large manifestations of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Yet he was always in the valley of humiliation, being dead to himself and to the world, and having his own will swallowed up in the will of his Saviour.

Comprehensive as his mind was, without his eminent holiness he could not have possessed those clear and wide views of God's government and revealed truth, which distinguish his writings. The wisdom in these pages is that of holiness teaching the things that are spiritually discerned; thus his works are a perpetual heavenly *Nepenthe*, both to the mind and heart. He never engages in bold speculation, carefully avoids metaphysical intricacies and abstractions, and in reasoning on the deep things of God, as we have seen, imitates the great Apostle, *Who art thou O man!* He sat at the feet of Christ, and as a little child learned of him. And all the aspect of his learning is meek and lowly. The doctrines of the Gospel appear with admirable clearness and symmetry; unmingled with philosophical refinement, they possess the same harmony and consistency as they do in the Bible. One of his most favorite topics is the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ through the merits of His righteousness; and he always treats it in such a manner that it seems dearer to the heart of the Christian than it was before. Indeed we may safely assert that the prominent excellence in Leighton's writings is the prominence of the Saviour, and the deep, heartfelt delight with which he dwells upon the glory, the beauty, the loveliness, and the preciousness of his character. He loved to view him in all his offices, and to meditate on the mysteries of his grace in the great scheme of salvation. With what affecting humility and tenderness would he speak of his Saviour's sufferings! He loved to ascribe every good thing to him, to feel his own infinite unworthiness, and to hide beneath the robe of his glorious righteousness.

Leighton's familiarity with the scriptures is remarkable, even in an age distinguished for practical scriptural knowledge. The secret of the Lord was with him; he read whole volumes of spiritual wisdom, to which holiness is the only key. Every word, every line of the sacred books was to him pregnant with celestial meaning: he applied to every part, both of the Old and New Testaments, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. He never used passages at random; every selection possesses a remarkable appositeness to the subject, so that its place could not be supplied by any other passage without injury. And he introduces the words of Scripture with affectionate reverence, as one who would make the most of a dear and valued friend. The simplicity, freedom, and clearness of his own style, and the holiness of his thoughts, together with the frequent recurrence of sweet and apposite passages from the Bible, make his writings a source of uninterrupted delightfulness. They are *like the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.*

It is worthy of remark, that he quotes from the Song of Solomon, with the same freedom and reverence as from any other part of the Bible. A mind of such unspotted purity as that of Archbishop Leighton could see no incongruity in the spiritual application of this book: there are modern critics, whose pious solicitude for the integrity of the sacred volume would fain exclude it from the canon.

Christians of the seventeenth century *meditated* much more on the Bible than we do now. We are too exclusively external, busy, *revival* Christians; they were thoughtful, inward, *biblical* Christians. They were formed to the stature of men so perfect in Christ Jesus, by much prayer, and long and quiet meditation on the word of God. They received the grace of God, and it grew like peach trees with a southern exposure, and the fruit was rich, mellow, beautiful. Now "the tender plant in a strange unkindly soil" is exposed to all manner of storms and tempests (at least of temptation by growing for the observance of others) before it has become sufficiently indurated; it is not left long enough in the Nursery, to expand quietly and happily beneath the beams of the sun of righteousness; and in our worldly, unwise haste, the fruit is plucked before it is ripe.

Critical scholarship is now probably more general; but the recurrence of such names as Walton and Lightfoot to the memory forbids us to say that it is likewise as profound. Nothing but prejudice grounded in sheer vanity and ignorance could make



any man imagine that while we deal with the word of God like vigorous scholars, the Christians of that age handled it with indiscriminate application. If to excel us in the prayerful study and reverential exposition of its spiritual meaning were thus to handle it, certainly they did. Nor was this all; very generally the ministers of that age were very great Hebraists and Grecians. But their attention was not so much fixed upon helps to understand the word as upon the word itself. It was their meditation all the day; they *ruminated* on it; its passages remained in the mind as germs for the accumulation of religious wisdom; and beautiful religious thoughts were continually clustering and crystallizing around them. At that time Christians were accustomed to find deep things of God in passages which a common reader would either not notice, or perhaps be inclined to ask what need of a revelation to convey such very simple knowledge to the mind. They drew precious truths from multitudes of little sleeping concealed fountains, which we hardly deign to visit; if no footsteps but ours interrupted their seclusion, they would all be grown over with moss. In reading the fifth chapter of Luke, Philip Henry would say, See here the reward of neighborly kindness. Peter did but lend his boat a short time to our Saviour to preach a sermon in, and the loan was repaid by a great draught of fishes.—If this disposition degenerated sometimes into conceit, and became mere quaintness, it oftener brought to view precious, heavenly, sparkling thoughts, and opened original truths, and administered unexpected and grateful instruction to the heart.

They possessed a spiritual imagination, restless and rich, which could at any time set a table even in the wilderness, and cover the desert with palaces. Their very dreams were like those of Jacob in the sweet open air of Padan Aram. Wherever in the Bible they rested to meditate, anon uprose like an exhalation, stately religious fabrics,

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With the sound  
Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet.

Archbishop Leighton and Bishop Hall in his *Contemplations* are among the happiest examples of this peculiarity. Leighton invariably mingles with it the chastening influence of a delicate refined taste. His works are every where a pure fountain, that

Sends up cold waters to the traveller  
With soft and even pulse.

There is nothing to interrupt the deep delight breathed over the

heart ; the air all round is calm ; the shade is grateful ; " here twilight is, and coolness ;" there is no thought, or sound, or image, to disturb the purity and peacefulness of the place and scene. Far and long we might wander in the wilderness of this world, and meet no such second resting-place.

Leighton's writings are not, like many others', (and even powerful minds) now a waste of sand, and now an Oasis of exceeding beauty ; they are all one perpetual variety of rich and solemn scenery, where you walk on in unconscious progress from one spot to another, now lost in the religious gloom and echoing walks of the forest, now emerging into the open light, which gleams upon thick golden furze and wild flowers, now watching the spire of a distant village, or the smoke rising through trees from a concealed hamlet, now listening to the roar of a waterfall, and now coming to an opening where you can see the Ocean. Here we are ever in the land Beulah. We are walking in the king's own gardens built for the entertainment of the Pilgrims.\* It seems as if we were wandering in Eden, through a forest of spices ; attended all the while by solemn warbling melodies, that rise and steal upon the air as sacredly, as if they were voices of praise from spirits dwelling in the flowers.

We have heard the observation quoted from Lord Bacon that mere abstract knowledge has something destructive in its tendencies. It is crude, poisonous, corrosive ; needs to be mollified by the kindly influence of moral feeling.† The remark was made

\* " Now I saw in my dream, that by this time the pilgrims were got over the Enchanted Ground, and entering into the country of Beulah,\* whose air was very sweet and pleasant, the way lying directly through it, they solaced themselves there for a season. Yea, here they heard continually the singing of birds, and saw every day the flowers appear in the earth, and heard the voice of the turtle in the land. In this country the sun shineth night and day : wherefore this was beyond the valley of the Shadow of Death, and also out of the reach of Giant Despair ; neither could they from this place so much as see Doubting Castle. Here they were within sight of the city they were going to : also here met them some of the inhabitants thereof : for in this land the shining ones commonly walked, because it was upon the borders of heaven."

*Pilgrim's Progress.*

BUNYAN is the sole example of a great poetical genius nourished entirely by the Bible. What unmeasured power does the Word of God exert in forming and enkindling the intellect ! (Compare note on page 47.)

\* Sol. Song ii. 10—12 ; Isa. lxii. 4—12.

† In speaking of certain writings, which " acted in no slight degree to prevent his mind from being imprisoned within the outlines of any single dogmatic system," COLERIDGE presents a similar idea, with a vividness which is truly startling. " They contributed," says he, " to keep alive the heart in the head ; gave me an indistinct, yet stirring and working presentment, that all the products of the mere reflective faculty partook of DEATH, and were as the rattling twigs and sprays in winter, into which a sap was yet to be propelled from some root to which I had not penetrated, if they were to afford my soul either food or shelter."—*Biographia Literaria*. Vol. i. page 92.

probably with exclusive reference to philosophy and science ; it possesses fearful truth in reference to the constitution of man as a religious being. The thoughts that wander through eternity must forever be the ministers of pain to the soul alienated from God. Knowledge must be allied with holiness before it can render its possessor happy. It is only by such an alliance that knowledge rises into wisdom, and becomes food for the soul ; as the constituent principles of our atmosphere are pure destruction uncombined, but form, in unison, our vital element. Mere intellectual grandeur has nothing in it attractive to the affections ; mere intellectual pursuits powerfully exhaust the mind, and if suffered to keep it in a state of tension become exceedingly painful. The highest atmosphere of thought, (to apply a physical image from Milton) " burns froze, and cold performs the effect of heat," unless it be a region irradiated by the love of God. There is the same result to the soul, which Humboldt experienced in the body, when ascending into a mountain air so thin and rarified, that the lungs labored spasmodically, and the blood almost started from the pores.\* Commingled with holiness, and thus attempered to the whole moral being, the clearest and most elevated intellectual atmosphere becomes the soul's connatural element, in which it moves with the freedom and elasticity of heavenly spirits.

Such an element the mind finds in the writings of Archbishop Leighton. If there be one quality which characterizes him, it is depth and majesty of thought ; it would be severe, but the influence of his piety invests it with a sweet moral radiance, making it mild and attractive. It would fill the reader with awe ; but there is present a glory of a nature so much purer and more celestial, that the intellectual grandeur of these volumes is merged and lost in the transcendent splendor of that holy spiritual light. The presence of Jesus transfigures his conceptions with such divine effulgence, that the power of his intellect is forgotten.

He throws off thoughts that apart would startle the mind, and that open whole provinces of original reflection, with a sort of pensive serenity, that bespeaks them the familiar inmates of his bosom. He says nothing more than seems to be perfectly spontaneous, but passes along dropping thought after thought, with calm luxuriance, from a mind long and habitually meditative on holy subjects, and overflowing with treasures of religious wisdom.

\* We have heard this fact very admirably applied to illustrate the effect of abstruse speculations *about* those religious mysteries, which, in our present existence, lie completely beyond the province of human reason.



Emotion follows emotion, as if a youthful seraph were soliloquizing aloud from a heart that enshrines the Saviour, singing and making melody to the Lord. His mind indeed was a holy temple, where pure thoughts went in and out continually. His pages are fraught, not with mere knowledge; they are full of wisdom, heaven-descended, gentle, pure, peaceable.

His meditative habits remind us of Cowper's admirable sentiment;

A life all turbulence and noise may seem  
To him that leads it wise, and to be praised;  
But wisdom is a pearl with most success  
Sought in still waters, and beneath clear skies.

In the midst of his works you seem to have ascended into the truth's pure empyrean; you are where the sky is troubled by no storm, and where the vision extends on all sides so far, that the most distant and spiritual conceptions seem presented to the mind as in a silent intuition. In this elevated region there are no rising mists of passion to obscure the truth, no selfish anxieties to weaken its power, no influence of prejudice to distort and mingle it with error. Leighton walked so closely with God, that here, in the sunshine of truth, his mind found its congenial abode. Spiritual truths of the highest import, and "thoughts that voluntarily move harmonious numbers," were the habitual food of his intellect. From this elevation he scarcely descended; he never engaged in controversy, nor systematized as a theologian, nor argued as a partisan; and his heart he kept with such diligence, that it needed no veil, diminution, or concealment of the light; he had no sinful thoughts, that, by fearing to be reprov'd, made it painful. The love of God rendered his intellectual vision piercing, and gave, besides, such spontaneous activity to his powers, that no moral lethargy ever made him weary. Every thing behind was forgotten in the absorbing desire to reach the attainment which was still before.

His Commentary on Peter has generally been esteemed highest in excellence among his writings. Some of his Sermons are equally beautiful. They were usually short. "Possibly," said he, "the longer the text be, and the shorter the sermon be, so much the better; for it is greatly to be suspected that our usual way of very short texts and very long sermons, is apt to weary people more, and profit them less."—" 'Tis better," said he, "to send them home still hungry than surfeited."

His Theological Lectures are full of the fruits of his profound learning, converted into rich transparencies by passing through

the fires of his imagination. They are a specimen of the manner in which an eminently holy mind will put to use the invaluable treasures contained in the ancient classics. His selections from the Greek and Latin authors, especially the readiness and exquisite taste with which he quotes from the Grecian Poets, justify the declaration of Burnet, that "he had laid together in his memory the greatest treasure of the best and wisest of all the ancient sayings of the heathens as well as Christians, that I have ever known any man master of: and he used them in the aptest manner possible." He possessed the moral alchemy, which turns all kinds of learning into Christian gold.\* With the most winning gentleness he would convert each lecture in reality into a practical sermon, and on all occasions made his addresses to the students affectionate persuasives to a life of piety.

Leighton's diction, though he did not take pains in selecting phrases or words, is chaste and beautiful as his thoughts are holy. Purity of diction seemed almost as natural in the movement of his intellect, as purity of feeling in that of his heart. His thoughts shine through his language like green leaves in amber. With what a sweet sentence does his Commentary on Peter open.—*The grace of God in the heart of man is a tender plant in a strange unkindly soil.* He seems not to have modelled his sentences by study, but to have let them flow on at random, as the shape of his thoughts might be: so that there never was a more correct picture of a writer's mind, nor one producing a deeper conviction of the richness of its stores.

His language surrounds his conceptions with a fulness of mellow light, pleasant to the spirit, and suited to their own richness, and meditative pathos. It is as if the softness of an Italian sunset had settled down on some clear, still evening, over the thoughtful features of an English landscape—a scene for instance in Cumberland,

With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,  
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received  
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

His style is pure, unelaborate English. It is a fountain of genuine, native idioms. His pages sparkle with expressions, which without degenerating into tameness, possess a delightful colloquial

\* "There is scarce a department of human knowledge, without some bearing on the various critical, historical, philosophical, and moral truths, in which the scholar must be interested as a clergyman. To give the history of the Bible as a book, would be little less than to relate the origin, or first excitement, of all the literature and science that we now possess."

COLERIDGE, *Biographia Literaria*. Vol. I. page 143.

simplicity. There is more of the Saxon part of our language, than of words of other origin. His words are indeed perfectly unexampled in that age for simplicity and purity ; and they seem to arrange themselves as self-intelligent, in the easiest and most unpremeditated forms, like dew imperceptibly descending on the mown grass. His style glides along like a placid river, "wind-ing at his own sweet will," amidst luxuriant landscapes, dotted with white cottages, shining through trees, and abundant in all images of purity and contentedness. It is peculiarly marked, neither by the vivacity of Baxter, nor the Greek-like profundity of Howe, nor the regularity of Bates, nor the profuse magnificence of Jeremy Taylor, nor the synonymous redundancy of Barrow ; but it possesses a mingled melody, simplicity, and richness, superior to either of these writers. It is read with greater ease, and a more continuous feeling of delight. All its excellencies are without effort, natural, modest ; its ornament, unsought, unstudied, and without display. It flows over the mind like David's rural Psalm, *The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want*. Indeed, as it comes nearer to the Bible in holiness, than any other book, so it has more of its sacred simplicity. It seems the very medium, through which holy thoughts would find their natural utterance. He never wrote to meet the reigning taste, and consequently there is little, either in matter or dress, which belongs to the age ; his beauties are those of nature, which always please. It is wonderful that in an age fond of antithesis and conceit, there should not be found a single trace of it in his writings, any more than in the pages of Addison ; and that in a nation so lavish in the accommodation of Scripture, and so full of spiritual affectation, he should have written uniformly in a style of such natural, native, idiomatic elegance. So that the scripture sown like orient pearls along his pages, appears in relief, and compels the notice, as a precious stone shines from its fletted setting, or, in that exquisite description of words fitly spoken, *as apples of gold in pictures of silver*. It is the Bible, whose spirit not only reigns throughout every paragraph, but whose voice, distinguishable in a moment, and to which he seems stopping to listen,

Fills up the interspersed vacancies  
And momentary pauses of the thought.

His illustrations are inimitably beautiful, and he throws them off with surprising fertility. They give such clearness to the thought, at the same time admitting the rich light of a fine imagination to stream upon it, that what was before but an intellectu-



at abstraction, receives, as it were, an instantaneous creation, and becomes a *thing* of sensible life and beauty; as if one of the invisible spirits, passing by in the air, should on a sudden assume a bodily shape of glory to the eye. His figures detain and fix for the mind's inspection the subtle shades of thought, and finish and shape those timid, half-disclosed spiritual appearances, that else, as they come to the vision like birds of Paradise, would fly away as quickly. It is as if the restless clouds with all the evanescent beauty of their deepening and changing hues at sunset, should hear a voice, and remain for hours, motionless and the same, in extreme stillness to the sight.

From some parts of his writings we should suppose him an admirer of Plato, and an intimate student of both would probably discern resemblances in his intellect and imagination with those of that "Divine Philosopher, that plank from the wreck of Paradise, thrown on the shores of idolatrous Greece." His mind was familiar with scholastic subtleties, but rose very far above them. He was not "put from beholding the still countenance of truth," by speculations, which even with so great a man as Plato, might be mere fanciful shapings of a mind unregenerate; fragments of cloud, as it were, which the sun interpenetrates and makes to look beautiful; or, at the uttermost, dim, shadowy, half revelations of awful truths, which Leighton's holy soul, in the light of the Bible, beheld as with the calmness of intuition.

His writings are full of deep poetry, both in feeling and expression. He might have written a religious Allegro and Penseroso, such was his command of soft-flowing language and chaste images. The whole array of his subjects, both of meditation and composition, were POETRY in its most elevated and spiritual sense. Every truly religious being possesses indeed its purest and deepest fountain within him. The life of God in the soul of Man not only regenerates, but calls into existence within the bosom of the individual an interminable succession of resplendent forms and images. And the more holy he becomes, the more his mind is filled with vast subjects of thought, and his imagination enriched with grandeur, and led to revel amidst the celestial wonders of the upper world, till his conceptions are all habitually expanded and transfigured with glory. The only reason why there are not more religious Poets, is because there are so few holy men.\*

\* "Religion is the Poetry and Philosophy of all mankind; unites in itself whatever is most excellent in either, and while it at one and the same time calls into action and supplies with the noblest materials both the imaginative and the intellective faculties, superadds the interests of the most substantial and heartfelt realities to both; to the

It is grievous to think that the best books in the English language are so little studied. What abundant materials in the literature of the Seventeenth Century, out of which to build up the individual mind strong and towering, and make the prevailing scholarship deep, rich, lasting ! How happens it, that when we may have for our constant companions such men as Leighton, and Milton, and Howe, and Tayler, and Hall, and men of a kindred spirit in a later age, Butler, Coleridge, Burke,—High Priests in the temple of knowledge, to open and read to us the great volume of truth,—how is it possible, that under the impulse of such minds, modern scholarship can be so destitute of enthusiastic intellectual energy, and richness and comprehensiveness of thought ? The fertility of the modern press in books of amusement, and, till very lately, the total want of new and available editions of old authors, has kept men in perfect ignorance of the boundless treasures hid in the early English writers, and those who inherited their spirit. With habits of mind induced by wandering through modern libraries, a student cannot relish books where thought is in unwrought ingots, instead of being spread out in ornamental gold-leaf over the surface. The mind is not *amused*. There is also much melancholy truth in Lord Bacon's account of the matter. "It is not only the difficulty and labor which men take in finding out of truth ; nor again that when it is found it imposeth upon men's thoughts, that doth bring lies in favor ; but a natural, though corrupt love of the lie itself. One of the latter schools of the Grecians examineth the matter, and is at a stand to think what should be in it, that men should love lies where neither they make for pleasure, as with poets ; nor for advantage, as with the merchant ; but for the lie's sake. But I cannot tell : this same truth is a naked and open daylight, that doth not show the masques and mummeries and triumphs of the world, half so stately and daintily as candle-light. Truth may perhaps come to the price of a pearl, that sheweth best by day ; but it will not rise to the price of a diamond or carbuncle, that sheweth best in varied lights. A mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure."

It is more grievous that with such examples of Holy Living, and such food for piety in the heart, given us not only in the

poetic vision and the philosophic idea. But in order to produce a similar effect, it must act in a similar way ; it must reign in the thoughts of man, and in the powers of akin to thought, as well as exercise an admitted influence over his hopes, and through those, on his deliberate and individual acts."

COLERIDGE. Lay Sermon on the text "*Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters.*" Page 88.

Bible, but in the writings of men, whose minds were baptized and thoroughly interpenetrated by its spirit, our Christian attainments should be so lean. The truth is, we use these means too much for delight, instead of improvement. We love the heavenly feeling induced by the perusal of Leighton, but we do not, when we have done reading him, employ the happy frame, and pour out its fulness in prayer. Would we only seize the intervals of softened thought and energetic purpose, the intervals of clear vision into Eternity, which visit us when we read the lives and writings of such holy men, and which besides, in the movements of the wonder-working Spirit, come to us often unaccountably, like an unexpected breeze from Paradise, and make use of them by praying *at the time*, with the power and fervency which such a state of mind enkindles, we should soon become eminent Christians. We are not watchful to obey those gentle impulses with which God draws us to himself; there is some excuse or other; we are not ready *now* for the work of advancing in holiness which was the all-consecrating purpose of existence in Leighton's bosom. That definite aim, which he lamented was so little prevalent, was in him like a passion, which overpowers and masters all other considerations, and binds them to its service. "It is wonderful," said Foster, "how even the apparent casualties of life seem to bow to a spirit that will not bow to them, and yield to assist a design, after having in vain endeavored to frustrate it." In the formation of Christian character we need that holy energy and decision, which, instead of being governed by external circumstances, governs them, and makes them religious servitors to feed the sacred fire that burns in the bosom. The Christian who does not *watch*, leaves himself a sport for all the casual influences that from every side can pour in upon his soul; he is taken along by successive events in his progress to eternity, and as it were handed forward in quiet passiveness from one to the other, till the last brings him, perhaps without warning, to the bar of God.

Before commencing the selections in order, from Archbishop Leighton's works, it will be interesting to bring together in shorter paragraphs some separate illustrations and thoughts.

Thou shalt be sure to be assaulted (by Satan) when thou hast received the greatest enlargements from Heaven, either at the sacrament, or in prayer, or in any other way; then look for an



onset. This arch pirate lets the empty ships pass, but lays wait for them when they return richest laden.

When God *awakes* his children, and makes them *rise*, this is a probable sign that it is near day. I mean, when he stirs them up to more than usual hopes and prayers and endeavors, it is very likely that he intends them some special good.

Which of us may not complain, (though few of us do) that our souls have either no wings to elevate themselves to the contemplation of him from whom they issued, or if they make attempts at it, our affections, engaged to the world, make us, like a bird tied by the foot, fall presently down again into the mire? It is high time to leave hunting shadows, and to turn our internal eye to the beholding of this Uncreated Light.

*Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.* It is not a histrionical weeping, only in public; for the speech is here directed to God, as a more frequent witness of these tears than any other; who is always the witness of the sincerity of them, when they cannot be hid from the eyes of men. For I deny not but they may and should have vent in public, especially at such times as are set apart for solemn humiliation and mourning. Yet even then, usually those streams run deepest, where they are stillest and most quietly conveyed. But surely they should not be fewer and less frequent alone than in company, for that is a little subject to suspicion. *My soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eyes shall weep sore and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive.*

That flower which follows the sun, doth so even in cloudy days: when it doth not shine forth, yet it follows the hidden course and motion of it. So, the soul that moves after God, keeps that course when He hides His face; is content, yea is glad at His will in all estates or conditions or events.

Speaking of extraordinary assurances of the love of God, Some weaker Christians, Leighton said, sometimes have them, while stronger are strangers to them; the Lord training these to live more contentedly by faith till the day of vision come.

Things are in their own course, and men are in their voluntary choices; yet all subserving the great Lord and His ends and His glory, who made them all for himself: as the lower orbs have each their motion, but are all wheeled about with the first.

When the Lord withholds mercies or comforts for a season, it is but till the due season; it is but to ripen them for us, which we in our childish haste would pluck green, when they would

be neither so sweet nor so wholesome. Therefore it is our wisdom and our peace, to resign all things into his hands.

In regard to the necessity of a day of universal judgement he observes profoundly, The process of many men's actions cannot be full at the end of their life as it shall be at that day : many have very large after-reckonings to come upon them for those sins of others to which they are accessory, though committed after their death ; as the sins of ill-educated children to be laid to the charge of their parents, the sins of such as any have corrupted, either by their counsels and pernicious, or evil examples, &c.

Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. Little sins prove usually introductions to greater sins. Admit but some inordinate desire into your heart, that you account a small matter, and it is a hundred to one but it shall prove a little thief got in, to open the door to a number of greater : as the Rabbins speak, a less evil brings a man into the hands of a greater.

All the inducements and occasions of sin, things that come near a breach are to be avoided ; that which the Rabbins call the *hedge* of the Law is not to be broken. They who do always all that they lawfully may, will sometimes do more.

To have a right view of the special providence of God towards his church, it must be taken altogether, and not by parcels. Pieces of rarest artifice, while they are a making, seem little worth, especially to an unskillful eye, which being completed, command admiration. Peter Martyn says well, *De operibus Dei, antequam actum, non est judicandum : There is no judging of the works of God, before they are finished.*

You (Christian that are of a lower order, know that you must shine too ; for it is a common duty. There is a certain company of small stars in the firmament, which, though they cannot be each one severally seen, yet being many, their united light makes a conspicuous brightness in the heavens, which is called *the milky way* : so though the shining of every private Christian is not so much severally remarkable, yet the concourse and meeting of their light together will make a bright path of holiness shine in the church.

The common way of referring things to God is indeed impious and dishonorable to Him, being really no other than calling Him to be a servant and executioner to our passion.

A skilful engraver makes you a statue indifferently of wood or stone or marble, as they are put into his hand ; so Grace forms a man to a Christian way of walking in any estate.

We would, naturally, rather carve for ourselves, and shape our own estate to our mind, which is a most foolish, yea an impious presumption : as if we were wiser than He who hath done it, and as if there were not as much, and it may be, more possibility of true contentment in a mean than in a far higher condition. The master's mind is often more toiled than the servant's body. But if our condition be appointed us, at least we would have a voice in some qualifications and circumstances of it ; as in this, if a man must serve, he would wish willingly that God would allot him a meek gentle master. And so in other things, if we must be sick, we would be well accommodated and not want helps ; but to have sickness and want means and friends for our help, this we cannot think of without horror. But this submission to God is never right, till all that concerns us be given up into His hand, to do with it, and with every article and circumstance of it, as seems good in His eyes.

Think you there is no way to Hell, but the way of open profaneness ? Yes, surely, many a way that seems smooth and *clear in a man's own eyes*, and yet will end in condemnation. Truth is but one, Error, endless and interminable. As we say of natural life and death, so may we say in respect of spiritual ; the way to life is one, but there are many out of it.

The heart is far more active in sin than any of the senses, or the whole body. The motion of spirits is far swifter than that of bodies. The mind can make a greater progress in any of these wanderings in one hour, than the body is able to follow in many days.

Men hear these (apostolic instructions) as general discourses, and let them pass so ; they apply them not, or if they do, it is readily to some other person. But they are addressed to all, that each one may regulate himself by them ; and so these divine truths are like a well drawn picture, which looks particularly upon every one amongst the great multitude that look upon it.

Even sin may be sinfully reprov'd ; and how thinkest thou that sin shall redress sin, and restore the sinner ? There is a great deal of spiritual art and skill in dealing with another's sin : it requires much spirituality of mind, and much prudence, and much love, a mind clear from passion ; for that blinds the eye, and makes the hand rough, so that a man neither rightly sees, nor rightly handles the sore he goes about to cure ; and many are lost through the ignorance and neglect of that due temper which is to be brought to this work. Men think otherwise, that



their rigors are much spirituality ; but they mistake it. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

If our feeling bowels and helping hand are due to all, and particularly to the godly, and we ought to pay this debt in outward distresses, how much more in their soul-afflictions !—the rather, because these are most heavy in themselves, and least understood, and therefore least regarded ; yea, sometimes rendered yet heavier by natural friends, possibly by their bitter scoffs and taunts, or by their slighting, or, at best, by their misapplying of proper helps and remedies, which, as unfit medicines, do rather exasperate the disease ; therefore they that do understand, and can be sensible of that kind of wound, ought so much the more to be tender and pitiful towards it, and to deal mercifully and gently with it. It may be, very weak things sometimes trouble a weak Christian ; but there is in the spirit of the godly, a humble condescension learned from Christ, who *broke not the bruised reed, nor quenched the smoking flax.* The least difficulties and scruples in a tender conscience, should not be roughly encountered ; they are as a knot in a silken thread, and require a gentle and wary hand to loose them.

He that refrains his lips, may ponder and pre-examine what he utters, whether it be profitable and reasonable or no ; and so the tongue of the just is as *finest silver*, Prov. x. 20 ; it is refined in the wise forethought and pondering of the heart : according to the saying, *Bis ad limam priusquam semel ad linguam.* *Twice to the file ere once to the tongue.* Even to utter knowledge and wise things profusely, holds not of wisdom, and a little usually makes most noise ; as the Hebrew proverb is, *Stater in lagena bis bis clamat.* *A penny in an earthen pot keeps a great sound and tinkling.* Certainly it is the way to have much inward peace, to be wary in this point. Men think to have solace by much free unbounded discourse with others, and when they have done, they find it otherwise, and sometimes contrary. He is wise that hath learned to speak little with others, and much with himself and with God.

Some good outward actions avail nothing, the soul being unrenewed ; as you may stick some figs, or hang some clusters of grapes upon a thorn-bush, but they cannot grow upon it. In this men deceive themselves, even such as have some thoughts of amendment ; when they fall into sin, and are reproved for it, they say, (and possibly think so too,) “ I will take heed to my-

self, I will be builty of this no more." And because they go no deeper, they are many of them ensnared in the same kind again; but however, if they do never commit that same sin, they do but change it for some other: as a current of waters, if you stop their passage one way, they rest not till they find another. The conversation can never be uniformly and entirely good, till the frame of the heart, the affections and desires that lodge in it, be changed.

*Be not strangers in suffering.* Which yet naturally we would be. We are willing to hear of peace and ease, and would gladly believe what we extremely desire. It is a thing of prime concern, to take at first a right notion of Christianity. This many do not, and so either fall off quickly, or walk on slowly and heavily; they do not reckon right the charges, take not into the account the duties of doing and suffering, but think to perform some duties, if they may with ease, and have no other foresight; they do not consider that self-denial, that fighting against a man's self, and fighting vehemently with the world, those trials, fiery trials, which a Christian must encounter with.

I remember what that pious Duke said at Jerusalem, when they offered to crown him king there, *Nolo auream, ubi Christus spinam*: No crown of gold, where Christ Jesus was crowned with thorns.

This is the way we must follow, or else resolve to leave Him; the way of the Cross is the royal way to the Crown. He said it, and reminded them of it again, that they might take the deep impression of it: *Remember what I said unto you, the servant is not greater than the Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.*

This is the path to the kingdom, that which all the sons of God, the heirs of it, have gone in, even Christ; according to that well known word, One son without sin, but not one without suffering: *Christ also suffered.*

Leighton's admirable thoughts on Peter's directions in regard to the putting on of apparel are not among the selections in the body of this work; their excellence is such, that rather than omit them we insert them here.

That nothing may be wanting to the qualifying of a Christian wife, she is taught how to dress herself: supposing a general desire, but especially in that sex, of ornament and comeliness: the

sex which began first our engagement to the necessity of clothing, having still a peculiar propensity to be curious in that, to improve the necessity to an advantage.

The direction here given, corrects the misplacing of this diligence, and addresses it right : *Let it not be of the outward man in plaiting, &c.*

Our perverse, crooked hearts turn all we use into disorder. Those two necessities of our life, *food and raiment*, how few know the right measure and bounds of them ! Unless poverty be our carver and cut us short, who, almost, is there, that is not bent to something excessive ! Far more are beholden to the lowliness of their estate, than to the lowliness of their mind, for sobriety in these things ; and yet, some will not be so bounded neither, but will profusely lavish out upon trifles, to the sensible prejudice of their estate.

It is not my purpose, nor do I think it very needful, to debate many particulars of apparel and ornament of the body, their lawfulness or unlawfulness : only,

*First*, It is out of doubt, that though clothing was first drawn on by necessity, yet, all regard of comeliness and ornament in apparel, is not unlawful ; nor doth the Apostle's expression here, rightly considered, fasten that upon the adorning he here speaks of. He doth no more universally condemn the use of gold for ornament, than he doth any other comely raiment, which here he means by that general word of *putting on of apparel* : for his [*not*] is comparative,—*not this adorning, but the ornament of a meek spirit*, that rather, and as being much more comely and precious ; as that known expression, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*.

*Secondly*, According to the different place and quality of persons, there may be a difference in this : thus, the robes of judges and princes are not only for personal ornament, but because there is in them, especially to vulgar eyes which seldom look deeper than the outside of things, there is, I say, in that apparel a representation of authority or majesty, which befits their place ; and besides this, other persons who are not in public place, men, or women, (who are here particularly directed,) yet may have in this some mark of their rank ; and in persons otherwise little distant, some allowance may be made for the habits and breeding of some beyond others, or the quality of their society, and those with whom they converse.

*Thirdly*, It is not impossible that there may be in some an affected pride in the meanness of apparel, and in others, under



either neat or rich attire, a very humble unaffected mind ; using it upon some of the aforementioned engagements, or such like, and yet, the heart not at all upon it. *Magnus qui fictilibus utitur tanquam argento, nec ille minor qui argento tanquam fictilibus*, says Seneca : Great is he who enjoys his earthenware as if it were plate, and not less great is the man to whom all his plate is no more than earthenware.

*Fourthly*, It is as sure as any of these, that real excess and vanity in apparel will creep in, and will always willingly convey itself under the cloak of some of these honest and lawful considerations. This is a prime piece of our heart's deceit, not only to hold out fair pretences to others, but to put the trick upon ourselves, to make ourselves believe we are right and single-minded in those things wherein we are directly serving our lusts, and feeding our own vanity.

*Fifthly*, To a sincere and humble Christian, very little either dispute or discourse concerning this will be needful. A tender conscience, and a heart purified from vanity and weaned from the world, will be sure to regulate this, and all other things of this nature, after the safest manner, and will be wary, 1. of lightness and fantastic garb in apparel, which is the very bush or sign hanging out, that tells a vain mind lodges within ; and, 2. of excessive costliness, which both argues and feeds the pride of the heart, and defrauds, if not others of their dues, yet, the poor of thy charity, which, in God's sight, is a due debt too. Far more comfort shalt thou have on thy death-bed, to remember that such a time, instead of putting lace on my own clothes, I helped a naked back to clothing, I abated somewhat of my former superfluities, to supply the poor's necessities—far sweeter will this be, than to remember, that I could needlessly cast away many pounds to serve my pride, rather than give a penny to relieve the poor.

As conscientious Christians will not exceed in the thing itself, so, in as far as they use lawful ornament and comeliness, they will do it without bestowing much either of diligence or delight on the business.

To have the mind taken and pleased with such things, is so foolish and childish a thing, that if most might not find it in themselves, they would wonder at it in many others, of years and common sense. *Non bis pueri, sed semper* : Not twice children, but always. And yet truly, it is a disease that few escape. It is strange upon how poor things men and women will be vain, and think themselves somebody ; not only upon some

comeliness in their face or feature, which though poor, is yet a part of themselves, but of things merely without them; that they are well lodged, or well mounted, or well apparelled, either richly, or well in fashion. Light empty minds are like bladders, blown up with any thing. And they who perceive not this in themselves, are the most drowned in it; but such as have found it out, and abhor their own follies, are still hunting and following these in themselves, to beat them out of their hearts and to shame them from such fopperies. The soul fallen from God, hath lost its true worth and beauty; and therefore it basely descends to these mean things, to serve and dress the body, and take share with it of its unworthy borrowed ornaments, while it hath lost and forgotten God, and seeks not after Him, knows not that He alone is the beauty and ornament of the soul, (Jer. ii. 32.) His Spirit and the graces of it, its rich attire, as is here particularly specified in one excellent grace, and it holds true in the rest.

The Apostle doth indeed expressly, on purpose, check and forbid vanity and excess in apparel, and excessive delight in lawful decorum, but his prime end is to recommend this other ornament of the soul, *the hidden man of the heart*.

It is the thing the best philosophy aimed at, as some of their wisest men do express it, to reduce men, as much as may be, from their body to their soul; but this is the thing that true religion alone doth effectually and thoroughly, calling them off from the pampering and feeding of a morsel for the worms, to the nourishing of that immortal being infused into it, and directing them to the proper nourishment of souls, the *Bread that came down from heaven*.

Whoever attempts to remark upon Archbishop Leighton's character, must feel that he has given at best a very inadequate delineation of its excellence. To suppose that he attained this excellence without a hard fought spiritual conflict, or that he had not, like other men, his bosom sins to wrestle with, would be as unphilosophical as it was unscriptural. "The composition and quality of the mind of a virtuous man," says a great meditative poet,\* "contemplated by the side of the Grave where his body is mouldering, ought to appear, and be felt, as something midway between what he was on Earth, walking about with his living frailties, and what he may be presumed to be as a Spirit in Heaven. What purity and brightness is that virtue clothed in, the image of which must no longer bless our living eyes! The

\* WORDSWORTH—Essay on Epitaphs.

character of a deceased Friend or beloved Kinsman is not seen, no—nor ought to be seen, otherwise than as a Tree through a tender haze or luminous mist, that spiritualizes and beautifies it; that takes away indeed, but only to the end that the parts which are not abstracted may appear more dignified and lovely, may impress and effect the more.” The character of Leighton, though no Christian can contemplate it without loving it, does not need even that degree of affectionate indulgence, in which the truth is thus “hallowed by love.” Where can another example be found of one in whom sanctification had proceeded so far this side the grave,—who had, in the language of his instructions for a holy life, so completely ‘disunited his heart from all things, and united it only to God;’ whose humility was so deep and continued; always displeased with himself, severe to his failings, adding to his attainments, forgetting that he possessed any holiness, so long as any remained to be possessed !\*

More might have been said, in the course of these introductory remarks on the invaluable example which Leighton has left to students in the use he made of secular learning. If holiness could make any man undervalue human wisdom, he would have undervalued it; but his piety led him to value more highly every acquisition which would in any way increase his moral power, or become its instrument. His love to God was an active principle pervading every part of his knowledge, and making it subservient to usefulness and growth in grace. Here is a *mind*, formed in a great measure out of the strong discipline of classical learning and what a noble result! Here we see one, holier, perhaps, than any uninspired man who ever lived, storing his comprehensive mind with spoils from every region of human as well as divine knowledge. One, whose piety and learning helped each other; who studied much and universally, but all for the Bible; who loved the classics, was profound in all the deep scholastic erudition of the age, yet felt that a single devotional thought was worth all the books in his library.

We might also have spoken more at large concerning his liberality of mind. So little is this quality understood, and so rare is the perfect exhibition of it, that Leighton’s biographers seem

\* The secret of his progress is expressed in a passage in one of AUGUSTINE’S Sermons. “Be always displeased at what thou art, if thou desirest to attain to what thou art not; for where thou hast pleased thyself there thou abidest. But if thou sayest, I have enough, thou perishest; always add, always walk, always proceed; neither stand still, nor go back, nor deviate; he that standeth still proceedeth not; he goeth back that continueth not; he deviateth that revolteth; he goeth better that creepeth in his way, than he that runneth out of his way.”



almost to have thought it necessary to make an apology for what they have called his latitudinarian views. It was understood still less during his own age and lifetime; in that unquiet, intolerant period men would hazard the destruction of all religion, rather than abandon the most unmeaning of its ceremonies; so Leighton's indifference in regard to indifferent things drew down upon him the censure and obloquy of all parties. "It was not only in the Roman customs," said Burke indignantly, "but it is in the nature and constitution of things, that obloquy and abuse are essential parts of triumph." Most true is this noble sentiment in regard to every triumph in the march of Christian benevolence.

Leighton's views were too comprehensive, his habits of thought too profound, the elevation of his mind too holy, to be touched by the intolerant spirit of the age. The early years which he spent in travelling on the continent no doubt contributed powerfully to liberalize his mind, and raise it above prejudice. With what lustre do his benevolent and comprehensive views as a churchman appear, contrasted with the feelings and conduct of many among that party at the present day;—an example of liberality in the seventeenth century, which men in the nineteenth scarcely understand! He was too much occupied in the pursuit of the substance of religion to let his attention fasten on its shadow; and such was his love of holiness, that wherever he marked even its faint exhibition, he instantly forgot every minor difference in the warmth of Christian affection. His aim was peace, and not victory; religious truth, and not the established religion.

The years are coming, 'the time of rest, the promised Sabbath comes,' when this discordant world shall be quieted and made happy by the universal prevalence of such a spirit. How many centuries have passed of human misery, depravity, and waste of mind! 'The groans of nature in this nether world must have an end.' From multitudes of regenerate hearts, and every year the multitude is rapidly increasing, the yearning prayer rises to God for deliverance:—

"Accomplish, then, their number; and conclude  
Time's weary course! Or if, by thy decree,  
The consummation that will come by stealth  
Be yet far distant, let thy word prevail,  
Oh! let thy Word prevail, to take away  
The sting of human nature. Spread the Law,  
As it is written in thy holy Book,  
Throughout all lands: let every nation hear

The high behest, and every heart obey ;  
 Both for the love of purity, and hope  
 Which it affords to such as do thy will,  
 And persevere in good, that they shall rise  
 To have a nearer view of Thee, in heaven.  
 —Father of Good ! this prayer in bounty grant,  
 In mercy grant it to thy wretched sons.  
 Then, nor till then, shall persecution cease,  
 And cruel wars expire. The way is marked,  
 The guide appointed, and the ransom paid.  
 Alas ! the nations, who of yore received  
 These tidings, and in Christian Temples meet  
 The sacred truth to acknowledge, linger still ;  
 Preferring bonds and darkness to a state  
 Of holy freedom, by redeeming love  
 Proffered to all, while yet on earth detained.  
 So fare the many ; and the thoughtful few,  
 Who in the anguish of their souls bewail  
 This dire perverseness, cannot choose but ask,  
 Shall it endure ?—Shall enmity and strife,  
 Falsehood and guile, be left to sow their seed,  
 And the kind never perish ? Is the hope  
 Fallacious, or shall righteousness obtain  
 A peaceable dominion, wide as earth,  
 And ne'er to fail ? Shall that blest day arrive,  
 When they, whose choice or lot it is to dwell  
 In crowded cities, without fear shall live,  
 Studious of mutual benefit ; and he,  
 Whom morning wakes, among sweet dewes and flowers  
 Of every clime, to till the lovely field,  
 Be happy in himself ?—The law of Faith  
 Working through Love, such conquest shall it gain,  
 Such triumph over sin and guilt achieve ?  
 Almighty Lord, thy further grace impart !  
 And with that help the wonder shall be seen  
 Fulfilled, the hope accomplished ; and thy praise  
 Be sung with transport and unceasing joy !”

THE EXCURSION. *Book Ninth.*

## SELECTIONS

FROM THE

### COMMENTARY ON ST. PETER.

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#### Holiness of Life.

THE Sunday's Sermon lasts but an hour or two, but holiness of life is a continued Sermon all the week long.

#### The Christian a Stranger and a Pilgrim.

At the best, a Christian is but a stranger here, set him where you will, as our Apostle teacheth after; and it is his privilege that he is so; and when he thinks not so, he forgets and disparages himself; he descends far below his quality, when he is much taken with any thing in this place of his exile.

But this is the wisdom of a Christian, when he can solace himself against the meanness of his outward condition, and any kind of discomfort attending it, with the comfortable assurance of the love of God, that he hath called him to holiness, given him some measure of it, and an endeavor after more; and by this may he conclude, that he hath ordained him unto salvation. If either he is a stranger where he lives, or as a stranger deserted of his friends, and very near stripped of all outward comforts, yet may he rejoice in this, that the eternal, unchangeable love of God, which is from everlasting to everlasting, is sealed to his soul. And O what will it avail a man to be compassed about with the favor of the world, to sit unmolested in his own home and possessions, and to have them very great and pleasant, to be well monied, and landed, and befriended, and yet estranged and severed from God, not having any token of his special love?

Elect . . . unto Obedience and Sprinkling of the Blood of Christ.

Men are not easily convinced and persuaded of the deep stain of sin, and that no other laver can fetch it out, but the sprinkling

of the blood of Jesus Christ. Some who have moral resolutions of amendment, dislike at least gross sins, and purpose to avoid them, and it is to them cleanness enough to reform in those things; but they consider not what becomes of the guiltiness they have contracted already, and how that shall be purged, how their natural pollution shall be taken away. Be not deceived in this; it is not a transient sigh, or a light word, or a wish of *God forgive me*; no, nor the highest current of repentance, nor that which is the truest evidence of repentance, amendment; it is none of these that purify in the sight of God, and expiate wrath; they are all imperfect and stained themselves, cannot stand and answer for themselves, much less be of value to counterpoise the former guilt of sin. The very tears of the purest repentance, unless they be sprinkled with this blood, are impure; all our washings without this, are but washings of the blackmoor, it is labor in vain. Jer. ii. 22; Job ix. 30, 31. There are none truly purified by the blood of Christ, who do not endeavor after purity of heart and conversation; but yet it is the blood of Christ by which they are all made fair, and there is no spot in them. Here it is said, *Elect to obedience*; but because that obedience is not perfect, there must be sprinkling of the blood too. There is nothing in religion further out of nature's reach, and out of its liking and believing, than the doctrine of redemption by a Saviour, and a crucified Saviour,—by Christ, and by his blood, first shed on the cross in his suffering, and then sprinkled on the soul by his Spirit. It is easier to make men sensible of the necessity of repentance and amendment of life, (though that is very difficult,) than of this purging by the sprinkling of this precious blood. Did we see how needful Christ is to us, we should esteem and love him more.

It is not by the hearing of Christ and of his blood in the doctrine of the Gospel; it is not by the sprinkling of water, even that water which is the sign of this blood, without the blood itself and the sprinkling of it. Many are present where it is sprinkled, and yet have no portion in it. Look to this, that this blood be sprinkled on your souls, that the destroying angel may pass by you. *There is a generation* (not some few, but a generation) *deceived in this; they are their own deceivers, pure in their own eyes.* (Prov. xxx. 12.) How earnestly doth David pray, *Wash me, purge me with hyssop!* Though bathed in tears (Ps. vi. 6) that satisfieth not: —*Wash thou me.* This is the honorable condition of the saints, that they are purified and consecrated unto God by this sprinkling; yea, they have on *long white robes washed in the blood of the Lamb.* There is mention indeed of *great tribulation*, but there is a double comfort joined with it. 1. They come out of it; that tribulation hath an end. And, 2. They pass from that to glory: for they have on the robe of *candidates, long whites robes washed in the blood of the Lamb*, washed white in blood. As for this



blood, it is nothing but purity and spotlessness, being stained with no sin, and besides hath that virtue to take away the stain of sin, where it is sprinkled.

#### Sanctification of the Spirit.

It is a very difficult work to draw a soul out of the hands and strong chains of Satan, and out of the pleasing entanglements of the world, and out of its own natural perverseness, to yield up itself unto God,—to deny itself, and live to him, and in so doing, to run against the main stream, and the current of the ungodly world without, and corruption within.

The strongest rhetoric, the most moving and persuasive way of discourse, is all too weak; the tongue of men or angels cannot prevail with the soul to free itself, and shake off all that detains it. Although it be convinced of the truth of those things that are represented to it, yet still it can and will hold out against it, and say, *Non persuadebis etiamsi persuaseris.*

The hand of man is too weak to pluck any soul out of the crowd of the world, and to set it in amongst the select number of believers. Only the Father of Spirits hath absolute command of spirits, viz., the souls of men, to work on them as he pleaseth, and where he will. This powerful, this sanctifying Spirit knows no resistance; works sweetly, and yet strongly; it can come into the heart, whereas all other speakers are forced to stand without. That still voice within persuades more than all the loud crying without; as he that is within the house, though he speak low, is better heard and understood, than he that shouts without doors.

When the Lord himself speaks by this his Spirit to a man, selecting and calling him out of the lost world, he can no more disobey than Abraham did, when the Lord spoke to him after an extraordinary manner, to depart from his own country and kindred: *Abraham departed as the Lord had spoken to him.* Gen. xii. 4. There is a secret, but very powerful, virtue in a word, or look, or touch of this Spirit upon the soul, by which it is forced, not with a harsh, but a pleasing violence, and cannot choose but follow it, not unlike that of Elijah's mantle upon Elisha. How easily did the disciples forsake their callings and their dwellings to follow Christ!

The Spirit of God draws a man out of the world by a sanctified light sent into his mind, 1. Discovering to him, how base and false the sweetness of sin is, which withholds men and amuses them, that they return not; and how true and sad the bitterness is, that will follow upon it; 2. Setting before his eyes the free and happy condition, *the glorious liberty of the sons of God*, the riches of their present enjoyment, and their far larger and assured hopes for hereafter; 3. Making the beauty of Jesus Christ visible to the soul; which straightway takes it so, that it cannot be stayed from

coming to him, though its most beloved friends, most beloved sins, lie in the way, and hang about it, and cry, Will you leave us so? It will tread upon all to come within the embraces of Jesus Christ, and say with St. Paul, *I was not disobedient to (or unpersuaded by) the heavenly vision.*

It is no wonder that the godly are by some called singular and precise; they are so, singular, a few selected ones picked out by God's own hand for himself: *Know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself*, Ps. iv. 3. *Therefore*, saith our Saviour, *the world hates you, because I have chosen you out of the world.* For the world lies in unholiness and wickedness,—is buried in it; and as living men can have no pleasure among the dead, neither can these elected ones amongst the ungodly: they walk in the world as warily as a man or woman neatly apparelled would do amongst a multitude that are all sullied and bemoired.

Endeavor to have this sanctifying Spirit in yourselves; pray much for it: for his promise is passed to us, that *He will give this Holy Spirit to them that ask it.* And shall we be such fools as to want it, for want of asking? When we find heavy fetters on our souls, and much weakness, yea averseness to follow the voice of God calling us to his obedience, then let us pray with the Spouse, *Draw me.* She cannot go nor stir without that drawing; and yet, with it, not only goes, but runs. *We will run after thee.*

Think it not enough that you hear the word, and use the outward ordinances of God, and profess his name; for many are thus called, and yet but a few of them are chosen. There is but a small part of the world outwardly called, in comparison of the rest that is not so, and yet the number of the true elect is so small, that it gains the number of these that are called, the name of *many*. They who are in the visible church, and partake of external vocation, are but like a large list of names (as in civil elections is usual,) out of which a small number is chosen to the dignity of true Christians, and invested into their privilege. Some men in nomination to offices or employments, think it a worse disappointment and disgrace to have been in the list, and yet not chosen, than if their names had not been mentioned at all. Certainly, it is a greater unhappiness to have been *Not far from the kingdom of God* (as our Saviour speaks,) and miss of it, than still to have remained in the farthest distance; to have been at the mouth of the haven, (the fair havens indeed,) and yet driven back and shipwrecked. Your labor is most preposterous; you seek to ascertain and make sure things that cannot be made sure, and that which is both more worth, and may be made surer than them all, you will not endeavor to make sure. Harken to the Apostle's advice, and at length set about this in earnest, *to make your calling and election sure.* Make sure this election, as it is here, (for that is the order,) your effectual calling sure, and that will

bring with it assurance of the other, the eternal election and love of God towards you, which follows to be considered.

#### Election, Effectual Calling, and Salvation.

The connexion of these, we are now for our profit to take notice of; that *effectual calling* is inseparably tied to this eternal *foreknowledge* or *election* on the one side, and to *salvation* on the other. These two links of the chain are up in heaven in God's own hand; but this middle one is let down to earth, into the hearts of his children, and they, laying hold on it, have sure hold on the other two, for no power can sever them. If, therefore, they can read the characters of God's image in their own souls, those are the counter-part of the golden characters of His love, in which their names are written in the book of life. Their believing writes their names under the promises of the revealed book of life,—the Scriptures, and so ascertains them, that the same names are in the secret book of life which God hath by himself from eternity. So that finding the stream of grace in their hearts, though they see not the fountain whence it flows, nor the ocean into which it returns, yet they know that it hath its source, and shall return to that ocean which ariseth from their eternal election, and shall empty itself into that eternity of happiness and salvation.

Hence much joy ariseth to the believer; this tie is indissoluble, as the agents are, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit: so are *election*, and *creation*, and *sanctification*, and *justification*, and *glory*. Therefore, in all conditions, believers may, from a sense of the working of the Spirit in them, look back to that election, and forward to that salvation; but they that remain unholy and disobedient, have as yet no evidence of this love; and therefore cannot, without vain presumption and self-delusion, judge thus of themselves, that they are within the peculiar love of God. But in this *Let the righteous be glad, and let them shout for joy, all that are upright in heart.*

It is one main point of happiness, that he that is happy doth know and judge himself to be so; this being the peculiar good of a reasonable creature, it is to be enjoyed in a reasonable way; it is not as the dull resting of a stone, or any other natural body in its natural place; but the knowledge and consideration of it, is the fruition of it, the very relishing and tasting its sweetness.

The perfect blessedness of the saints is awaiting them above, but even their present condition is truly happy, though incompletely, and but a small beginning of that which they expect. And this their present happiness is so much the greater, the more clear knowledge and firm persuasion they have of it. It is one of the pleasant fruits of the godly, *to know the things that are freely*



*given them of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 12. Therefore the Apostle, to comfort his dispersed brethren, sets before them a description of that excellent spiritual condition to which they are called.

If *election*, *effectual calling*, and *salvation* be inseparably linked together, then, by any one of them a man may lay hold upon all the rest, and may know that his hold is sure; and this is that way wherein we may retain, and ought to seek, that comfortable assurance of the love of God. Therefore *make your calling sure*, and by that, your *election*; for that being done, this follows of itself. We are not to pry immediately into the decree, but to read it in the performance. Though the mariner sees not the pole-star, yet the needle of the compass which points to it, tells him which way he sails; thus the heart that is touched with the loadstone of Divine love, trembling with godly fear, and yet still looking towards God by fixed believing, points at the love of election, and tells the soul that its course is heavenward, towards the haven of eternal rest. He that loves, may be sure he was loved first; and he that chooses God for his delight and portion, may conclude confidently, that God hath chosen him to be one of those that shall enjoy him, and be happy in him forever; for that our love, and electing of him is but the return and repercussion of the beams of his love shining upon us.

Find thou but within thee sanctification by the Spirit, and this argues, necessarily, both justification by the Son, and the election of God the Father. *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.* 1 John iv. 13. It is a most strange demonstration, *ab effectu reciproco*: he called those he hath elected; he *elects* those he called. Where this sanctifying Spirit is not, there can be no persuasion of this eternal love of God: they that are *children of disobedience* can conclude no otherwise of themselves but that they are the *children of wrath*. Although, from present unsanctification, a man cannot infer that he is not elected; for the decree may, for a part of man's life, run (as it were) under ground; yet this is sure, that the estate leads to death, and unless it be broken, will prove the black line of reprobation. A man hath no portion amongst the children of God, nor can read one word of comfort in all the promises that belong to them, while he remains unholy. Men may please themselves in profane scoffing at the holy Spirit of grace, but let them withal know this, that that holy Spirit, whom they mock and despise, is that Spirit *who seals men to the day of redemption.* Ephes. iv. 30.

If any pretend that they have the Spirit, and so turn away from the straight rule of the holy Scriptures, they have a spirit indeed, but it is a fanatical spirit, the spirit of delusion and giddiness; but the Spirit of God, that leads his children in the way of truth, and is for that purpose sent them from heaven to guide them thither, squares their thoughts and ways to that rule whereof it is au-



thor, and that word which was inspired by it, and sanctifies them to obedience. *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* 1 John ii. 4.

Now this Spirit which sanctifieth, and sanctifieth to obedience, is within us the evidence of our election, and the earnest of our salvation. And whoso are not sanctified and led by this Spirit, the Apostle tells us what is their condition. Rom. viii. 9. *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.*

Let us not delude ourselves : this is a truth, if there be any in religion ; they who are not made Saints in the state of grace, shall never be Saints in glory.

The stones which are appointed for that glorious temple above, are hewn and polished, and prepared for it here ; as the stones were wrought and prepared in the mountains, for building the temple at Jerusalem.

This is God's order : Psalm lxxxiv. 12. He gives *grace and glory*. Moralists can tell us, that the way to the temple of honor, is through the temple of virtue. They that think they are bound for heaven in the ways of sin, have either found a new way untrodden by all that are gone thither, or will find themselves deceived in the end. We need not then that poor shift for the pressing of holiness and obedience upon men, to represent it to them as the meriting cause of salvation. This is not at all to the purpose, seeing that without it the necessity of holiness to salvation is pressing enough ; for holiness is no less necessary to salvation, than if it were the meriting cause of it ; it is as inseparably tied to it in the purpose of God. And in the order of performance, godliness is as certainly before salvation, as if salvation did wholly and altogether depend upon it, and were in point of justice deserved by it. Seeing, then, there is no other way to happiness but by holiness, no assurance of the love of God without it, take the Apostle's advice ; study it, seek it, follow earnestly after holiness, *without which no man shall see the Lord.*

Grace unto you, and Peace be multiplied.

It hath always been a civil custom amongst men, to season their intercourse with good wishes one for another ; this the Apostles use in their epistles, in a spiritual divine way, suitable to their holy writings. It well becomes the messengers of *grace and peace*, to wish both, and to make their salutation conform to the main scope and subject of their discourse. The Hebrew word of salutation we have here—*Peace*, and that which is the spring both of this and all good things, in the other word of salutation used by the Greeks—*Grace*. All right rejoicing and prosperity, and happiness, flow from this source, and from this alone, and are sought elsewhere in vain.

In general, this is the character of a Christian spirit, to have a

heart filled with *blessing*, with this sweet good-will and good wishing to all, especially to those who are their brethren in the same profession of religion. And this charity is a precious balm, diffusing itself in the wise and seasonable expressions of it, upon fit occasions; and those expressions must be cordial and sincere, not like what you call court holy-water, in which there is nothing else but falsehood, or vanity at the best. This manifests men to be the sons of blessing, and of the ever-blessed God, the father of all blessing, when in his name they bless one another: yea, our Saviour's rule goes higher, to *bless those that curse them*, and urges it by that relation to God as their Father, that in this they may resemble him: *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven.*

#### Peace with God.

From our sense of this peace, or reconciliation with God, arises that which is our inward peace, a calm and quiet temper of mind. This peace which we have with God in Christ, is inviolable; but because the sense and persuasion of it may be interrupted, the soul that is truly at peace with God, may for a time be disquieted in itself, through weakness of faith, or the strength of temptation, or the darkness of desertion, losing sight of that grace, that love and light of God's countenance, on which its tranquillity and joy depend. *Thou didst hide thy face*, saith David, *and I was troubled*. But when these eclipses are over, the soul is revived with new consolation, as the face of the earth is renewed and made to smile with the return of the sun in the spring; and this ought always to uphold Christians in the saddest times, *viz.*, that the grace and love of God towards them, depend not on their sense, nor upon any thing in them, but is still in itself incapable of the smallest alteration.

It is natural to men to desire their own peace, the quietness and contentment of their minds: but most men miss their way to it; and therefore find it not; for there is no way to it, indeed, but this one, wherein few seek it, *viz.*, reconciliation and peace with God. The persuasion of that alone makes the mind clear and serene, like your fairest summer days. *My peace I give you*, saith Christ, *not as the world. Let not your hearts be troubled*. All the peace and favor of the world cannot calm a troubled heart; but where this peace is which Christ gives, all the trouble and disquiet of the world cannot disturb it. *When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only.* (See also for this, Psalm xli. cxxiii.) All outward distress to a mind thus at peace, is but as the rattling of the hail upon the tiles, to him that sits within the house at a sumptuous feast. A good conscience is styled a feast, and with an advantage

which no other feast can have, nor, were it possible, could men endure it. A few hours of feasting will weary the most professed epicure; but a conscience thus at peace, is a *continual feast*, with continual unwearied delight. What makes the world take up such a prejudice against religion as a sour unpleasant thing? They see the afflictions and griefs of Christians, but they do not see their joys, the inward pleasure of mind that they can possess in a very hard estate. Have you not tried other ways enough? Hath not he tried them who had more ability and skill for it than you, and found them not only *vanity* but  *vexation of spirit*? If you have any belief of holy truth, put but this once upon the trial, seek peace in the way of grace. This inward peace is too precious a liquor to be poured into a filthy vessel. A holy heart, that gladly entertains grace, shall find that it and peace cannot dwell asunder.

An ungodly man may sleep to death in the lethargy of carnal presumption and impenitency; but a true, lively, solid peace, he cannot have. *There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God, Isa. lvii. 21.* And if He say, there is none, speak peace who will, if all the world with one voice should speak it, it shall prove none.

#### SPIRITUAL THANKSGIVING AND JOY.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. 1 Pet. 1: 3, 4.

It is a cold lifeless thing to speak of spiritual things upon mere report: but they that speak of them as their own, as having share and interest in them, and some experience of their sweetness, their discourse of them is enlivened with firm belief, and ardent affection; they cannot mention them, but their hearts are straight taken with such gladness, as they are forced to vent in praises. Thus our Apostle here, and St. Paul, and often elsewhere, when they considered these things wherewith they were about to comfort the godly to whom they wrote, they were suddenly elevated with the joy of them, and broke forth into thanksgiving; so teaching us, by their example, what real joy there is in the consolations of the Gospel, and what praise is due from all the saints to the God of those consolations. This is such an inheritance, that the very thoughts and hopes of it are able to sweeten the greatest griefs and afflictions. What then shall the possession of it be, wherein there shall be no rupture, nor the least drop of any grief at all? The main subject of these verses is, that which is the main comfort that supports the spirits of the Godly in all conditions.

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*As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart. Prov.*



xxv. 20. Worldly mirth is so far from curing spiritual grief, that even worldly grief, where it is great and takes deep root, is not allayed but increased by it. A man who is full of inward heaviness, the more he is encompassed about with mirth, it exasperates and enrages his grief the more; like ineffectual weak physic, which removes not the humor, but stirs it and makes it more unquiet; but spiritual joy is seasonable for all estates: in prosperity, it is pertinent to crown and sanctify all other enjoyments, with this which so far surpasses them; and in distress, it is the only *Nepenthe*, the cordial of fainting spirits: so, Ps. iv. 7, *He hath put joy into my heart.* This mirth makes way for itself, which other mirth cannot do. These songs are sweetest in the night of distress. Therefore the Apostle, writing to his scattered afflicted brethren, begins his Epistle with this song of praise, *Blessed be the God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

#### The Inheritance of the Saints.

God is bountiful to all, gives to all men all that they have, health, riches, honor, strength, beauty, and wit, but these things he scatters (as it were) with an indifferent hand. Upon others he looks, as well as upon his beloved children; but the *inheritance* is peculiarly *theirs*. Inheritance is convertible with Sonship; Abraham gave gifts to Keturah's sons, and dismissed them, Gen. xxv. 5; but the inheritance was for the Son of the promise. When we see a man rising in preferment or estate, or admired for excellent gifts and endowments of mind, we think there is a happy man: but we consider not that none of all those things are matter of inheritance; within a while he is to be turned out of all, and if he have not somewhat beyond all those to look to, he is but a miserable man, and so much the more miserable, that once he seemed and was reputed happy. There is a certain time wherein heirs come to possess: thus it is with this inheritance too. There is mention made by the Apostles of *a perfect man,—into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*, Eph. iv. 13. And though the inheritance is rich and honorable, yet the heir, being young, is held under discipline, and is more strictly dealt with, possibly, than the servants,—sharply corrected for that which is let pass in them; but still, even then, in regard of that which he is born to, his condition is much better than theirs, and all the correction he suffers prejudices him not, but fits him for inheriting. The love of our heavenly Father is beyond the love of mothers in tenderness, and yet beyond the love of fathers (who are usually said to love more wisely) in point of wisdom. He will not undo his children, his heirs, with too much indulgence. It is one of his heavy judgments upon the foolish children of disobedience, that *Ease shall slay them, and their prosperity shall prove their destruction.*



While the children of God are childish and weak in faith, they are like some great heirs before they come to years of understanding: they consider not their inheritance, and what they are to come to, have not their spirits elevated to thoughts worthy of their estate, and their behaviour conformed to it; but as they grow up in years, they come, by little and little, to be sensible of those things, and the nearer they come to possession, the more apprehensive they are of their quality, and of what doth answerably become them to do. And this is the duty of such as are indeed heirs of glory;—to grow in the understanding and consideration of that which is prepared for them, and to suit themselves, as they are able, to those great hopes. This is what the Apostle St. Paul prays for, on behalf of his Ephesians, ch. i. ver. 18. *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the Saints.* This would make them holy and heavenly, to have their conversation in Heaven, from whence they look for a Saviour. That we may, then, the better know somewhat of the dignity and riches of this inheritance, let us consider the description which is here given us of it. And, first, It is

#### Incorruptible.

Although this seems to be much the same with the *third* quality, *That fadeth not away*, (which is a borrowed expression for the illustrating of its incorruptibleness,) yet, I conceive that there is some difference, and that in these three qualities there is a gradation. Thus it is called *incorruptible*; that is, it perisheth not, cannot come to nothing, is an estate that cannot be spent; but though it were abiding, yet it might be such as that the continuance of it were not very desirable; it would be but a misery at best, to continue always in this life. *Plotinus* thanked God that his soul was not tied to an immortal body. Then, *undefiled*; it is not stained with the least spot: *this* signifies the purity and perfection of it, as *that* the perpetuity of it. It doth not only abide, and is pure, but both together, it abideth always in its integrity. And lastly, *it fadeth not away*; it doth not fade nor wither at all, is not sometimes more, sometimes less pleasant, but ever the same, still like itself; and this constitutes the immutability of it.

As it is *incorruptible*, it carries away the palm from all earthly possessions and inheritances; for all those epithets are intended to signify its opposition to the things of this world, and to shew how far it excels them all; and in this comparative light we are to consider it. For as divines say of the knowledge of God which we have here, that the negative notion makes up a great part of it—we know rather what He is not than what he is, infinite, incomprehensible, immutable, &c., so it is of this happiness, this inheritance; and indeed it is no other than God. We cannot tell you

what it is, but we can say so far what it is not, as declares it is unspeakably above all the most excellent things of the inferior world and this present life. It is by privatives, by removing imperfections from it, that we describe it, and we can go no farther than this,—*Incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.*

It fadeth not away.

No spot of sin nor sorrow there ; all pollution wiped away, and all tears with it ; no envy nor strife ; not as here among men, one supplanting another, one pleading and fighting against another, dividing this point of earth with fire and sword ;—no, this inheritance is not the less by division, by being parted amongst so many brethren, every one hath it all, each his crown, and all agreeing in casting them down before his throne, from whom they had received them, and in the harmony of his praises.

This inheritance is often called a kingdom, and a crown of glory. This last word may allude to those garlands of the ancients, and this is its property, that the flowers in it are all *Amaranthes*, (as a certain plant is named,) and so it is called, (1 Pet. v. 4,) *A crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

No change at all there, no winter and summer : not like the poor comforts here, but a bliss always flourishing. The grief of the saints here, is not so much for the changes of outward things, as of their inward comforts. *Suavis hora, sed brevis mora.* Sweet presences of God they sometimes have, but they are short, and often interrupted ; but *there* no cloud shall come betwixt them and their sun ; they shall behold him in his full brightness forever. As there shall be no change in their beholding, so no weariness nor abatement of their delight in beholding. They sing a new song, always the same, and yet always new. The sweetest of our music, if it were to be heard but for one whole day, would weary them who are most delighted with it. What we have here cloy, but satisfies not ; the joys above never cloy, and yet always satisfy.

It is reserved for them in Heaven.

It is doubtless a great contentment to the children of God, to hear of the excellencies of the life to come ; they do not use to become weary of that subject ; yet there is one doubt, which, if it be not removed, may damp their delight in hearing and considering of all the rest. The richer the estate is, it will the more kindle the malice and diligence of their enemies to deprive them of it, and to cut them short of possessing it. And this they know, that those spiritual powers who seek to ruin them, do overmatch them far, both in craft and force.

Against the fears of this, the Apostle comforts the heirs of salvation, assuring them, that, as the estate they look for is excellent, so it is certain and safe, laid up where it is out of the reach of all

adverse powers, *reserved in heaven for you*. Besides that this is a further evidence of the worth and excellency of this inheritance, it makes it sure. It confirms what was said of its excellency; for it must be a thing of greatest worth, that is laid up in the highest and best place of the world, namely, in Heaven for you, where nothing that is impure once enters, much less is laid up and kept. Thus, the land where this inheritance lies, makes good all that hath been spoken of the dignity and riches of it.

But further, as it is a rich and pleasant country where it lieth, it hath also this privilege, to be the only land of rest and peace, free from all possibility of invasion. There is no spoiling of it, and laying it waste, and defacing its beauty, by leading armies into it, and making it the seat of war; no noise of drums or trumpets, no inundations of one people driving out another and sitting down in their possessions. In a word, as there is nothing there subject to decay of itself, so neither is it in danger of fraud or violence. When our Saviour speaks of this same happiness in a like term, Matt. vi. 20, what is here called an *inheritance*, is there called a *treasure*. He expresses the permanency of it by these two, that it *hath neither moth nor rust in itself to corrupt it*, nor can *thieves break through and steal it*. There is a worm at the root of all our enjoyments here, corrupting causes within themselves; and besides that, they are exposed to injury from without, which may deprive us of them. How many stately palaces, which have been possibly divers years in building, hath fire upon a very small beginning destroyed in a few hours! What great hopes of gain by traffic hath one tempest mocked and disappointed! How many who have thought their possessions very sure, yet have lost them by some trick of law, and others (as in time of war) been driven from them by the sword! Nothing free from all danger but this *inheritance*, which is laid up in the hands of God, and kept in heaven for us. The highest stations in the world, namely, the estate of kings, they are but mountains of prey, one robbing and spoiling another; but in that holy mountain above, there is none to hurt, or spoil, or offer violence. What the prophet speaks of the church here, is more perfectly and eminently true of it above, Isaiah lxxv. 25.

This is, indeed, a necessary condition of our joy in the thoughts of this happy estate, that we have some persuasion of our propriety, that it is *ours*; that we do not speak and hear of it, as travellers passing by a pleasant place do behold and discourse of its fair structure, the sweetness of the seat, the planting, the gardens, the meadows that are about it, and so pass on; having no further interest in it. But when we hear of this glorious inheritance, this treasure, this kingdom that is pure, and rich, and lasting, we may add, It is mine, it is reserved in heaven, and reserved for me; I have received the evidences, and the earnest of it; and,



as it is kept safe for me, so I shall likewise be preserved to it, and that is the other part of the certainty that completes the comforts of it. Ephes. i. 14.

The salvation which Christ hath purchased is, indeed, laid up in Heaven, but we who seek after it, are on earth, compassed about with dangers and temptations. What avails it us, that our salvation is in Heaven, in the place of safety and quietness, while we ourselves are tossed upon the stormy seas of this world, amidst rocks and shelves, every hour in danger of shipwreck? Our inheritance is in a sure hand indeed, our enemies cannot come at it; but they may overrun and destroy us at their pleasure, for we are in the midst of them. Thus might we think and complain, and lose the sweetness of all our other thoughts concerning Heaven, if there were not as firm a promise for our own safety in the midst of our dangers, as there is of the safety of our inheritance that is out of danger.

The Preservation of the Saints, with the Causes of it.

*Kept by the power of God through faith.* The inheritance is kept not only in safety, but in quietness. The children of God, for whom it is kept, while they are here, are kept safe indeed, but not unmolested and unassaulted; they have enemies, and such as are stirring, and cunning, and powerful; but, in the midst of them, they are guarded and defended; they perish not, according to the prayer of our Saviour poured out for them, John xvii. 16, *I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world; but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil.*

They have the prince of the power of the air, and all his armies, all the forces he can make, against them. Though his power is nothing but tyranny and usurpation, yet because once they were under his yoke, he bestirs himself to pursue them, when they are led forth from their captivity, as Pharaoh, with all his chariots and horses and horsemen, pursues after the Israelites going out of Egypt.

The word in the original here translated *kept*, is a military term, used for those who are *kept* as in a fort or garrison-town besieged. So Satan is still raising batteries against this fort, using all ways to take it, by strength or stratagem, unwearied in his assaults, and very skilful to know his advantages, and where we are weakest, there to set on. And besides all this, he hath intelligence with a party within us, ready to betray us to him; so that it were impossible for us to hold out, were there not another watch and guard than our own, and other walls and bulwarks than any that our skill and industry can raise for our own defence. In this, then, is our safety, that there is a power above our own, yea and above all our enemies, that guards us, *salvation itself our walls and bulwarks.* We ought to watch, but when we



do so in obedience to our commander, the Captain of our salvation, yet it is His own watching, who *sleeps* not, nor so much as *slumbers*, it is that preserves us, and makes ours not to be in vain. Ps. cxxvi. 1; Is. xxvii. 3. And therefore those two are jointly commanded, *Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation*. *Watch*, there is the necessity of our diligence; *Pray*, there is the insufficiency of it, and the necessity of His watching, by whose power we are effectually preserved, and that power is our fort. Is. xxvi. 1, *Salvation hath God appointed for walls and bulwarks*. What more safe than to be walled with *Salvation* itself? So, Prov. xviii. 10. *The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous fly into it and are safe*.

Now the causes of our preservation are two, 1. Supreme, *The Power of God*. 2. Subordinate, *Faith*. The supreme power of God, is that on which depend our stability and perseverance. When we consider how weak we are in ourselves, yea, the very strongest among us, and how assaulted, we wonder, and justly we may, that any can continue one day in the state of grace; but when we look on the strength by which we are guarded, the power of God, then we see the reason of our stability to the end; for Omnipotency supports us, and the everlasting arms are under us.

Then *Faith* is the second cause of our preservation; because it applies the first cause, the power of God. Our faith lays hold upon this power, and this power strengthens faith, and so we are preserved; it puts us within those walls, sets the soul within the guard of the power of God, which, by self-confidence and vain presuming in its own strength, is exposed to all kind of danger. Faith is an humble, self-denying grace; it makes the Christian nothing in himself and all in God.

The weakest persons who are within a strong place, women and children, though they were not able to resist the enemy, if they were alone, yet so long as the place wherein they are is of sufficient strength, and well manned, and every way accommodate to hold out, they are in safety; thus the weakest believer is safe, because by believing he is within the strongest of all defences. Faith is the victory, and Christ sets his strength against Satan's; and when the Christian is hard beset with some temptation, too strong for himself, then he looks up to Him who is the great conqueror of the powers of darkness, and calls to him, "Now, Lord, assist thy servant in this encounter, and put to "thy strength, that the glory may be thine." Thus, faith is such an engine as draws in the power of God and his Son Jesus into the works and conflicts that it hath in hand. *This is our victory even our faith*. 1 John v. 4.

It is the property of a good Christian to magnify the power of God, and to have high thoughts of it, and therefore it is his privilege to find safety in that power. David cannot satisfy himself

with one or two expressions of it, but delights in multiplying them. Psalm xviii. 1. *The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.* Faith looks above all, both that which the soul hath, and that which it wants, and answers all doubts and fears with this almighty power upon which it rests.

Unto Salvation ready to be revealed in the Last Time.

This salvation is that great work wherein God intended to manifest the glory of his grace, contrived before time, and in the several ages of the world brought forward, after the decreed manner; and the full accomplishment of it is reserved for the end of time.

The souls of the faithful do enter into the possession of it, when they remove from their houses of clay; yet is not their happiness complete till that great day of the appearing of Jesus Christ. They are naturally imperfect till their bodies be raised and rejoined to their souls, to partake together of their bliss; and they are mystically imperfect, till all the rest of the members of Jesus Christ be added to them.

But then shall their joy be absolutely full, when both their own bodies, and the mystical body of Christ shall be glorified; when all the children of that glorious family shall meet, and sit down to that great marriage supper at their Father's table. Then shall the music of that new song be full, when there is not one wanting of those that are appointed to sing it for eternity. In that day shall our Lord Jesus be glorified in his Saints, and admired in all them that believe, 2 Thess. i. 10.

You see what it is that the Gospel offers you, and you may gather how great both your folly and your guiltiness will be, if you neglect and slight so great salvation when it is brought to you, and you are entreated to receive it. This is all that the preaching of the word aims at, and yet, who hearkens to it? How few lay hold on this eternal life, this inheritance, this crown that is held forth to all that hear of it!

Oh! that you could be persuaded to be saved, that you would be willing to embrace salvation! You think you would; but if it be so, then I may say, though you would be saved, yet your custom of sin, your love to sin, and love to the world, will not suffer you; and these will still hinder you, unless you put on holy resolutions to break through them, and trample them under foot, and take this kingdom by a hand of violence, which God is so well pleased with. He is willingly overcome by that force, and gives this kingdom most willingly, where it is so taken; it is not attained by slothfulness, and sitting still with folded hands; it must be invaded with strength of faith, with armies of prayers and tears; and they who set upon it thus, are sure to take it.

Consider what we are doing, how we misplace our diligence on things that abide not, or we abide not to enjoy them. *We have no abiding city here*, saith the Apostle, but he adds that which comforts the citizens of the New Jerusalem, *We look for one to come, whose builder and maker is God*. Hear not these things idly, as if they concerned you not, but let them move you to resolution and actions. Say, as they said of *Canaan*, *It is a good land, let us go up and possess it*. Learn to use what you have here as travellers, and let your home, your inheritance, your treasure be on high, which is by far the richest and the safest; and if it be so with you, then *Where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also*.

#### The profitableness of Temptations.

A man is not only unknown to others but to himself, that hath never met with such difficulties as require faith, and Christian fortitude, and patience to surmount them. How shall a man know whether his meekness and calmness of spirit be real or not, while he meets with no provocation, nothing that contradicts or crosses him? But when somewhat sets upon him, that is in itself very unpleasant and grievous to him, and yet, if in that case he retains his moderation of spirit, and flies not out into impatience, either against God or men, this gives experiment of the truth and soundness of that grace within him; whereas standing water which is clear at top while it is untouched, yet if it have mud at the bottom, stir it a little, and it rises presently.

It is not altogether unprofitable; yea, it is great wisdom in Christians to be arming themselves against such temptations as may befall them hereafter, though they have not as yet met with them; to labor to overcome them before hand, to suppose the hardest things that may be incident to them; and to put on the strongest resolutions they can attain unto. Yet all that is but an imaginary effort; and therefore there is no assurance that the victory is any more than imaginary too, till it come to action, and then, they that have spoken and thought very confidently, may prove but (as one said of the Athenians) *fortes in tabula*, patient and courageous in picture or fancy; and notwithstanding all their arms, and dexterity in handling them by way of exercise, may be foully defeated when they are to fight in earnest. The children of Ephraim being armed, and carrying bows (says the Psalmist, Psal. lxxviii. 9,) *yet turned back in the day of battle*. It is the battle that tries the soldier, and the storm the pilot. How would it appear that Christians can be themselves, not only patient, but cheerful in poverty, in disgrace, and temptations, and persecutions, if it were not often their lot to meet with them? He who framed the heart, knows it to be but deceitful, and He who gives grace, knows the weakness and strength of it exactly; yet he is pleased



to speak thus, that by afflictions and hard tasks he tries what is in the hearts of his children. For the word of God speaks to men and therefore it speaks the language of the children of men : thus, Gen. xxii. 12. *Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.*

God delights to call forth his champions to meet with great temptations, to make them bear crosses of more than ordinary weight ; as commanders in war put men of most valor and skill upon the hardest services. God sets some strong furious trial upon a strong Christian, made strong by his own grace, and by his victory, makes it appear to the world, that though there is a great deal of the counterfeit coin of profession in religion, yet some there are, who have the power, the reality of it, and that it is not an invention, but there is truth in it ; that the invincible grace, the very Spirit of God dwells in the hearts of true believers ; that he hath a number who do not only speak big, but do indeed and in good earnest despise the world, and overcome by his strength. Some men take delight to see some kind of beasts fight together ; but to see a Christian mind encountering some great affliction, and conquering it, to see his valor in not sinking at the hardest distresses of this life, nor the most frightful end of it, the cruellest kinds of death, for His sake,—this is (as one said) *dignum Deo spectaculum* : this is a combat which God delights to look upon, and he is not a mere beholder in it, for it is the power of his own grace that enables and supports the Christian in all those conflicts and temptations.

Ye are in Heaviness, through manifold Temptations.

This the Apostle blames not, but aims at the moderating of it. Seek not altogether to dry up this stream, but to bound it, and keep it within its banks. Grace doth not destroy the life of nature, but adds to it a life more excellent ; yea grace doth not only permit, but requires some feeling of afflictions. There is an affected pride of spirit in some men, instead of patience, suitable only to the doctrine of Stoics as it is usually taken ; they strive not to feel at all the afflictions that are on them ; but this is to *despise the correction of the Lord*, which is alike forbidden with fainting under it. Heb. xii. 5. We should not stop our ears, but *hear the rod and him that hath appointed it*, as the prophet speaks, Mic. vi. 9. Where there is no feeling at all, there can be no patience. Consider it as the hand of God, and thence argue the soul into submission, Psal. xxxix. 9. *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.* But this heaviness is mitigated, and set, as it were, within its banks, betwixt these two considerations, 1. The utility, 2. The brevity of it : the profitableness—and the shortness of it.

To a worldly man, great gain sweetens the hardest labor ; and



to a Christian, spiritual profit and advantage may do much to move him to take those afflictions well which are otherwise very unpleasant. Though *they are not joyous for the present*, yet this allays the sorrow of them, the fruit that grows out of them, *that peaceable fruit of righteousness*, Heb. xii. 11.

*A bundle of folly is in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall beat it out*, saith Solomon. Though the children of God are truly (as our Saviour calls them) the children of wisdom, yet, being renewed only in part, they are not altogether free from those follies that call for this rod to beat them out, and sometimes have such a bundle of follies as require a bundle of rods to be spent upon it—*many and manifold afflictions*.

It is not an easy matter to be drawn from, nor to be beaten from, the love of this world, and this is what God mainly requires of his children, that they be not in love with the world, nor the things of it; for that is contrary to the love of God, and so far as that is entertained, this is wanting. And if in the midst of afflictions they are sometimes subject to this disease, how would it grow upon them with ease and prosperity! When they are beaten from one worldly folly or delight, they are ready, through nature's corruption, to lay hold upon some other,—being thrust out from it at one door, to enter at some other; as children unwilling to be weaned, if one breast be imbittered, they seek to the other; and therefore there must be somewhat to drive them from that too. Thus it is clear, there is need, great need of afflictions, yea, of many afflictions, that the Saints *be chastened by the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world*. 1 Cor. xi. 32.

Many resemblances there are for illustration of this truth, in things both of nature and of art, some common, and others choicer; but these are not needful. The experience of Christians tells them, how easily they grow proud, and secure, and carnal, with a little ease, and when outward things go smoothly with them; and therefore what unhappiness were it for them to be very happy that way!

Let us learn, then, that in regard of our present frailty there is need of afflictions, and so not promise ourselves exemption, how calm soever our seas are for the present; and then for the number, and measure, and weight of them, to resign that wholly into the hands of our wise Father and Physician, who perfectly knows our mould and our maladies, and what kind and quantity of chastisement is needful for our cure.

#### The Godly Man's comfort amidst Heaviness.

The heart being grieved in one thing naturally looks out for its ease to some other; and there is usually somewhat that is a man's great comfort, that he turns his thoughts to, when he is crossed and afflicted in other things: but herein lies the folly of

the world, that the things they choose for their refuge and comfort are such as may change themselves, and turn into discomfort and sorrow ; but the godly man, who is the fool in the natural man's eyes, goes beyond all the rest in his wise choice in this. He rises above all that is subject to change, casts his anchor within the vail. That in which he rejoiceth, is still matter of joy unmoveable and unalterable ; although not only his estate, but the whole world were turned upside down, yet this is the same, or rather in the Psalmist's words, *Though the earth were removed, and the greatest mountains cast into the sea, yet will not we fear.* Psal. xlv. 2. When we shall receive that rich and pure and abiding inheritance, that salvation which shall be revealed in the last time, and when time itself shall cease to be, then there shall be no more reckoning of our joys by days and hours, but they shall run parallel with eternity. Then all our love that is now scattered and parcelled out upon the vanities amongst which we are here, shall be united and gathered into one, and fixed upon God, and the soul filled with the delight of his presence.

The sorrow was limited and bounded by the considerations we spoke of ; but this joy, this exultation, and leaping for joy (for so it is) is not bounded, it cannot be too much ; its measure is, to know no measure. The afflictions, the matter of heaviness, are but a transient touch of pain ; but that whereon this joy is built, is most permanent, the measure of it cannot exceed, for the matter of it is infinite and eternal, beyond all hyperbole. There is no expression we have which can reach it, much less go beyond it ; itself is the hyperbole, still surpassing all that can be said of it. Even in the midst of heaviness itself, such is the joy that it can maintain itself in the depth of sorrow ; this oil of gladness still swims above, and cannot be drowned by all the floods of affliction, yea, it is often most sweet in the greatest distress. The soul relishes spiritual joy best, when it is not glutted with worldly delights, but finds them turned into bitterness.

For application. In that we profess ourselves Christians, we all pretend to be the sons of God, and so heirs of this glory ; and if each man were individually asked, he would say, he hoped to attain it : but were there nothing else, this might abundantly convince us, that the greatest part of us delude ourselves, and are deceived in this ; for how few are there who do really find this height of joy, of gladness and exultation, in their thoughts and hopes of it, who do daily refresh and glad themselves with the consideration of what is laid up for them above, more than with all their enjoyments here below !

Consider how the news of some small outward advantage that is to come to us, raises our light vain hearts, and makes them leap within us ; and yet this news of a kingdom prepared for us, (if we be indeed believers,) stirs us not ; our hearts are as little af-

fectured with it as if it concerned us not at all : and this is too clear an evidence against us, that indeed it concerns us not, that our portion as yet is not in it.

In what a fool's paradise will men be with the thoughts of worthless things, and such things too as they shall never obtain, nor ever shall have any further being than what they have in their fancy ! And how will men frequently roll over in their minds the thoughts of any pleasing good they hope for ! And yet we, who say we have hopes of the glory to come, can pass many days without one hour spent in the rejoicing thoughts of the happiness we look for ! If any person of a mean condition for the present, were made sure to become very rich and be advanced to great honor within a week, and after that to live to a great age in that high estate, enjoying health and all imaginable pleasures ; judge ye, whether in the few days betwixt the knowledge of those news and the enjoying of them, the thoughts of what he were to attain to, would not be frequent with him, and be always welcome. There is no comparison betwixt all we can imagine this way, and the hopes we speak of ; and yet, how seldom are our thoughts upon those things, and how faint and slender is our rejoicing in them ! Can we deny that it is unbelief of these things, that causeth this neglect and forgetting of them ! The discourse, the tongue of men and angels cannot beget Divine belief of the happiness to come ; only He who gives it, gives faith likewise to apprehend it, and lay hold upon it, and, upon our believing, to be filled with joy in the hopes of it.

#### THE TRIAL OF FAITH.

That the trial of your Faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

*The way of the just* (saith Solomon) *is as the shining light, that shineth more and more to the perfect day.* Still making forward, and ascending towards perfection, moving as fast when they are clouded with affliction as at any time else ; yea, all that seems to work against them, furthurs them. Those graces that would possibly grow heavy and unwieldy, by too much ease, are held in breath, and increase their activity and strength by conflict. Divine grace, even in the heart of weak and sinful man, is an invincible thing. Drown it in the waters of adversity, it rises more beautiful, as not being drowned indeed, but only washed ; throw it into the furnace of fiery trials, it comes out purer, and loses nothing but the dross which our corrupt nature mixes with it. Thus the Apostle here expounds the *if need be* of the former verse, and so justifies the joy in afflictions, which there he speaks of, by their utility and the advantage faith derives from them : it is so tried that it shall appear in its full brightness at the revelation of Jesus Christ.



This trial (as that of gold) may be for a two-fold end. 1. For experiment of the truth and pureness of a Christian's faith. 2. To refine it yet more, and to raise it to a higher pitch or degree of pureness.

1. The furnace of afflictions shews upright, real faith to be such indeed, remaining still the same even in the fire, the same that it was, undiminished, as good gold loses none of its quantity in the fire. Doubtless many are deceived in time of ease and prosperity, with imaginary faith and fortitude: so that there may be still some doubt, while a man is underset with outward helps, as riches, friends, esteem, &c., whether he leans upon those or upon God, who is an invisible support, though stronger than all that are visible, and is the peculiar and alone stay of faith in all conditions. But when all these outward props are plucked away from a man, then it will be manifest, whether something else upholds him or not; for if there be nothing else, then he falls; but if his mind stands firm and unremoved as before, then it is evident he laid not his weight upon these things which he had then about him, but was built upon a foundation though not seen, which is able alone to stay him, although he be not only frustrated of all other supports, but beaten upon with storms and tempests; as our Saviour says *the house fell not, because it was founded on a rock.* Matt. vii. 25.

This testified the truth of *David's* faith, who found it stay his mind upon God, when there was nothing else near that could do it: *I had fainted, unless I had believed.* Psal. xxvii. 13. So in his strait, 1 Sam. xxx. 6, where it is said that *David was greatly distressed; but he encouraged himself in the Lord his God.* Thus Psal. lxxxiii. 26. *My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and portion forever.* The heart's natural strength of spirit and resolution may bear up under outward weakness, or the failing of the flesh; but when the heart itself fails, which is the strength of the flesh, what shall strengthen it? nothing but God, *who is the strength of the heart and its portion forever.* Thus faith worketh alone, when the case suits that of the Prophet's, Hab. iii. 17. *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, &c., yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

In spiritual trials, which are the sharpest and most fiery of all, when the furnace is within a man, when God doth not only shut up his loving-kindness from his feeling, but seems to shut it up in hot displeasure; when he writes bitter things against him, yet then to depend upon him, and wait for his salvation, and the more he smites the more he cleaves to him,—this is not only a true but a strong, and very refined faith indeed. Well might he say, *When I am tried I shall come forth as gold,* who could say that word, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:* though I saw, as it



were, his hand lifted up to destroy me, yet from that same hand would I expect salvation.

2. As the furnace shews faith to be what it is, so also it better it, and makes it more precious and purer than it was.

The graces of the Spirit, as they come from the hand of God who infuses them, are nothing but pureness; but being put into a heart where sin dwells, (which till the body be dissolved and taken to pieces, cannot be fully purged out,) there they are mixed with corruption and dross: and particularly faith is mixed with unbelief, and love of earthly things, and dependance upon the creature, if not more than God, yet together with him; and for this is the furnace needful, that the soul may be purified from this dross, and made more sublime and spiritual in believing. It is a hard task, and many times comes but slowly forward, to teach the heart, by discourse and speculation, to sit loose from the world at all sides, not to cleave to the best things in it, though we be compassed about with them, *though riches do increase, yet, not to set our hearts on them*, Psal. lxxii. 10, not to trust in such *uncertain things*, as they are, as the Apostle speaks, 1 Tim. vi. 17. Therefore God is pleased to choose the more effectual way to teach his own the right and pure exercise of faith, either by withholding or withdrawing those things from them. He makes them relish the sweetness of spiritual comfort, by depriving them of those outward comforts whereon they were in most danger to have deoted to excess, and so to have forgotten themselves and him. When they are reduced to necessity, and experimentally trained up easily to let go their hold of any thing earthly, and to stay themselves only upon their rock, this is the very refining of their faith, by those losses and afflictions wherewith they are exercisd. They who learn bodily exercises, as fencing, &c. are not taught by sitting still, and hearing rules, or seeing others practise, but they learn by exercising themselves. The way to profit in the art of believing, or of coming to this spiritual activity of faith, is, to be often put to that work in the most difficult way, to make up all wants and losses in God, and to sweeten the bitterest griefs with his loving kindness.

*Might be found unto praise, and honor and glory.*] This is the end that is intended, and shall be certainly obtained by all these hot trials. Faith shall come through them all, and *shall be found unto praise*, &c. An unskillful beholder may think it strange to see gold thrown into the fire, and left there for a time; but he that puts it there, would be loth to lose it; his purpose is to make some costly piece of work of it. Every believer gives himself to Christ, and he undertakes to present them blameless to the Father; not one of them shall be lost, nor one drachm of their faith; they shall be found, and their faith shall be found, when He appears. That faith which is here in the furnace, shall be then

made up into a crown of pure gold : *it shall be found unto praise, and honor, and glory.*

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind ; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.

The main of a Christian's duty lies in these two things, patience in suffering, and avoidance of sin, and they have a natural influence upon each other. Although affliction simply doth not, yet affliction sweetly and humbly carried, doth purify and disengage the heart from sin, wean it from the world and the common ways of it. And again, holy and exact walking keeps the soul in a sound, healthful temper, and so enables it to patient suffering, to bear things more easily ; as a strong body endures fatigue, heat, cold, and hardship, with ease, a small part whereof would surcharge a sickly constitution. The consciousness of sin, and careless, unholy courses, do wonderfully weaken a soul, and distemper it, so that it is not able to endure much ; every little thing disturbs it. Therefore, the Apostle hath reason, both to insist so much on these two points in this Epistle, and likewise to interweave the one so often with the other, pressing jointly throughout, the cheerful bearing of all kinds of afflictions, and the careful forbearing all kinds of sin ; and out of the one discourse, he slides into the other ; as here.

And as the things agree in their nature, so, in their great pattern and principle, Jesus Christ : and the Apostle still draws both from thence ; that of patience, ch. iii. 18, that of holiness, here : *Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us, &c.*

The chief study of a Christian, and the very thing that makes him to be a Christian, is, conformity with Christ. *Summa religionis imitari quem colis : This is the sum of religion* (said that wise heathen, Pythagoras,) *to be like him whom thou worshippingest.* But this example being in itself too sublime, is brought down to our view in Christ ; the brightness of God is veiled, and veiled in our own flesh, that we may be able to look on it. The inaccessible light of the Deity, is so attempered in the humanity of Christ, that we may read our lesson by it in Him, and may direct our walk by it. And that truly is our only way ; there is nothing but wandering and perishing in all other ways, nothing but darkness and misery out of Him : but *He that follows me*, says He, *shall not walk in darkness.* John viii. 12. And therefore is He set before us in the Gospel, in so clear and lively colors, that we may make this our whole endeavor, to be like Him.

We are to follow the Captain of our Salvation.

It is *due* that we follow Him, who led thus as the *Captain of our Salvation* ; that we follow Him in suffering, and in doing, see-

ing both were so for us. It is strange how some armies have addicted themselves to their Head, so as to be at his call night and day, in summer and winter, to refuse no travail or endurance of hardship for him, and all only to please him, and serve his inclination and ambition; as Cæsar's trained bands, especially the veterans, it is a wonder what they endured in counter-marches, and in traversing from one country to another. But besides that our Lord and Leader is so great and excellent, and so well deserves following for his own worth, this lays upon us an obligation beyond all conceiving, that he first suffered for us, that he endured such hatred of men, and such wrath of God the Father, and went through death, so vile a death, to procure our life. What can be too bitter to endure, or to sweet to forsake, to follow Him? Were this duly considered, should we cleave to our lusts, or to our ease? Should we not be willing to go through fire and water, yea, through death itself, yea, were it possible, through many deaths, to follow him.

Consider, as this conformity is *due*, so it is made *easy* by that His suffering for us. Our burden which pressed us to hell, being taken off, is not all that is left, to suffer or to do, as nothing? Our chains which bound us over to eternal death, being knocked off, shall we not walk, shall we not run, in His ways? Oh! think what that burden and yoke was which he hath eased us of, how heavy, how unsufferable it was, and then we shall think, what He so truly says, that all he lays on is sweet; *His yoke easy, and His burden light*. Oh! the happy change to be rescued from the vilest slavery, and called to conformity and fellowship with the Son of God!

We must be armed with the Mind of Christ.

There is still fighting, and sin will be molesting you; though wounded to death, yet will it struggle for life, and seek to wound its enemy; it will assault the graces that are in you. Do not think if it be once struck, and you have given it a stab near to the heart, by the *sword of the Spirit*, that therefore it will stir no more. No, so long as you live in the flesh, in these bowels there will be remainders of the life of this flesh, your natural corruption; therefore ye must be armed against it. Sin will not give you rest, so long as there is a drop of blood in its veins, one spark of life in it: and that will be so long as you have life here. This old man is stout, and will fight himself to death; and at the weakest it will rouse up itself, and exert its dying Spirits, as men will do sometimes more eagerly than when they were not so weak, nor so near death.

This the children of God often find to their grief, that corruptions which they thought had been cold dead, stir and rise up again, and set upon them. A passion or lust, that after some



great stroke, lay a long while as dead, stirred not, and therefore they thought to have heard no more of it, though it shall never recover fully again, to be lively as before, yet will revive in such a measure as to molest, and possibly to foil them yet again. Therefore is it continually necessary that they live in arms, and put them not off to their dying day; till they put off the body, and be altogether free of the flesh. You may take the Lord's promise for victory in the end; that shall not fail; but do not promise yourself ease in the way, for that will not hold. If at some times you be undermost, give not all for lost: he hath often won the day, who hath been foiled and wounded in the fight. But likewise take not all for won, so as to have no more conflict, when sometimes you have the better, as in particular battles. Be not desperate when you lose, nor secure when you gain them: when it is worse with you, do not throw away your arms, nor lay them away when you are at best.

Now, the way to be armed is this, *the same mind*: How would my Lord, Christ, carry himself in this case? And what was *His* business in all places and companies? Was it not to do the will, and advance the glory, of his father? If I be injured and reviled consider how would He do in this? Would He repay one injury with another, one reproach with another reproach? No, *being reviled, He reviled not again*.

Well, through His strength, this shall be my way too. Thus ought it to be with the Christian, framing all his ways, and words, and very thoughts, upon that model, *the mind of Christ*, and studying in all things to walk even as he walked; studying it much, as the reason and rule of mortification, and drawing from it, as the real cause and spring of mortification.

The pious contemplation of His death will most powerfully kill the love of sin in the soul, and kindle an ardent hatred of it. The Believer, looking on his Jesus as crucified for him and *wounded for his transgression*, and taking in deep thoughts of His spotless innocency, which deserved no such thing, and of his matchless love, which yet endured it all for him, will then naturally think. Shall I be a friend to that which was His deadly enemy? Shall sin be sweet to me, which was so bitter to Him, and that for my sake? Shall I ever lend it a good look, or entertain a favourable thought of that which shed my Lord's blood? Shall I live in that for which He died, and died to kill it in me? Oh! let it not be.

It is, then, the only thriving and growing life, to be much in the lively contemplation and application of Jesus Christ; to be continually studying Him, and conversing with Him, and drawing from Him, *receiving of his fulness, grace for grace*. John i. 16. Wouldst thou have much power against sin, and much increase of holiness, let thine eye be much on Christ; set thine heart on



Him; let it dwell in Him, and be still with Him. When sin is likely to prevail in any kind, go to Him, tell Him of the insurrection of His enemies, and thy inability to resist, and desire Him to suppress them, and to help thee against them, that they may gain nothing by their stirring, but some new wound. If thy heart begin to be taken with, and move towards, sin, lay it before Him; the beams of His love shall eat out that fire of those sinful lusts. Wouldst thou have thy pride, and passions, and love of the world, and self-love, killed, go sue for the virtue of His death, and that shall do it. Seek His spirit, the Spirit of meekness, and humility, and Divine love. Look on Him, and He shall draw thy heart heavenwards, and unite it to Himself, and make it like Himself. And is not that the thing thou desirest?

That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

The chains of sin are so strong, and so fastened on our nature, that there is in us no power to break them off, till a mightier and stronger Spirit than our own come into us. The Spirit of Christ dropped into the soul, makes it able to *break through a troop, and leap over a wall*, as David speaks of himself, when furnished with the strength of his God. Psal. xviii. 29. Men's resolutions fall to nothing; and as a prisoner who attempts to escape, and does not, is bound faster, thus usually it is with men in their self-purposes of forsaking sin: they leave out Christ in the work, and so remain in their captivity, yea, it grows upon them. And while we press them to free themselves, and show not Christ to them, we put them upon an impossibility. But a look to Him makes it feasible and easy. Faith in Him, and that love to Him which faith begets, break through and surmount all difficulties. It is the powerful love of Christ, that kills the love of sin, and kindles the love of holiness in the soul; makes it a willing sharer in His death, and so, a happy partaker of His life. For that always follows, and must of necessity, as here is added: *He that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sin*,—is crucified and dead to it; but he loses nothing: yea, it is his great gain, to lose that deadly life of the flesh for a new spiritual life, a life indeed *living unto God*; that is the end why he so dies, that he may thus live—*That he no longer should live to the lusts of men*, and yet, live far better, *live to the will of God*. He that is one with Christ by believing, is one with Him throughout, in death and in life. As Christ rose from the dead, so he that is dead to sin with Him, through the power of His death, rises to that new life with Him, through the power of His resurrection. And these two constitute our sanctification, which, whosoever do partake of Christ, and are found in Him, do certainly draw from Him. Thus are they joined, Rom. vi. 11: *Likewise reckon you yourselves dead indeed to sin, but alive to God, and both, through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

All they who do really come to Jesus Christ, as they come to Him as their Saviour to be clothed with Him, and made righteous by Him, so they come likewise to Him as their Sanctifier, to be made new and holy by Him, to die and live with Him, to *follow the Lamb wheresoever he goes*, through the hardest sufferings, and death itself. And this spiritual suffering and dying with Him, is the universal way of all his followers; they are all martyrs thus in the crucifying of sinful flesh, and so dying for Him, and with Him. And they may well go cheerfully through. Though it bear the unpleasant name of *death*, yet, as the other death is, (which makes it so little terrible, yea, often to appear so very desirable to them,) so is this, the way to a far more excellent and happy life; so that they may pass through it gladly, both for the company and the end of it. It is with Christ they go into His death, as unto life in His life. Though a believer might be free from these terms, he would not. No, surely. Could he be content with that easy life of sin, instead of the Divine life of Christ? No, he will do thus, and *not accept of deliverance, that he may obtain* (as the Apostle speaks of the martyrs) *a better resurrection*. Heb. xi. 35. Think on it again, you to whom your sins are dear still, and this life sweet; you are yet far from Christ and His life.

#### The Unconverted Man of External Morality.

Men who are some way exempted from the blot of these foul impieties, may still remain slaves to sin, alive to it, and dead to God, living to the lusts of men, and not to the will of God, pleasing others and themselves, and displeasing Him. And the smoothest, best bred, and most moralized natural man, is in this base thralldom; and he is the more miserable, in that he dreams of liberty in the midst of his chains, thinks himself clean by looking on those that wallow in gross profaneness; takes measure of himself by the most crooked lives of ungodly men about him, and so thinks himself very straight; but lays not the straight rule of the will of God to his ways and heart, which if he did, he would then discover much crookedness in his ways, and much more in his heart, that now he sees not, but takes it to be square and even.

#### No half way Conversion.

We readily take any little slight change for true conversion, but we may see here that we mistake it; it doth not barely knock off some obvious apparent enormities, but casts all in a new mould, alters the whole frame of the heart and life, kills a man, and makes him alive again. And this new life is contrary to the old; for the change is made with that intent, *that he live no longer to the lusts of men, but to the will of God*. He is now, indeed, *a new creature*, having a new judgment

and new thoughts of things, and so, accordingly, new desires and affections, and answerably to these, new actions. *Old things are passed away and dead, and all things are become new.* 2. Cor. v. 17.

Political men have observed, that in states, if alterations must be, it is better to alter many things than a few. And physicians have the same remark for one's habit and custom for bodily health, upon the same ground; because things do so relate one to another, that except they be adapted and suited together in the change, it avails not: yea, it sometimes proves the worse in the whole, though a few things in particular seem to be bettered. Thus, half-reformations in a Christian turn to his prejudice: it is only best to be reformed throughout, and to give up with all idols; not to live one half to himself and the world, and, as it were, another half to God, for that is but falsely so, and, in reality it cannot be. The only way is, to make a heap of all, to have all sacrificed together, and to live to no lust, but altogether and only to God. Thus it must be: there is no monster in the new creation, no half new creature, *either all, or not at all.* We have to deal with the Maker and the Searcher of the heart in this turn, and He will have nothing unless He have the heart, and none of that neither, unless He have it all. If thou pass over into His kingdom, and become His subject, thou must have Him for thy only sovereign. *Omnisque potestas impatens consortis*: Royalty can admit of no rivalry, and least of all, the highest and best of all. If Christ be thy king, then His laws and sceptre must rule all in thee: thou must now acknowledge no foreign power; that will be treason.

And if He be thy husband, thou must renounce all others. Wilt thou provoke him to jealousy? Yea, beware how thou givest a thought or a look of thy affection any other way, for He will spy it, and will not endure it. The title of a husband is as strict and tender, as the other of a king.

It is only best to be thus: it is thy great advantage and happiness, to be thus entirely freed from so many tyrannous base lords, and to be now subject only to one, and He so great, and withal so gracious and sweet a king, *the Prince of Peace.* Thou wast hurried before, and racked with the very multitude of them. Thy lusts, so many cruel task-masters over thee, they gave thee no rest, and the work they set thee to was base and slavish, more than the burdens, and pots, and toiling in the clay of Egypt; thou wast held to work in the earth, to pain, and to soil and foul thyself with their drudgery.

Now thou hast but One to serve, and that is a great ease; and it is no slavery, but true honor, to serve so excellent a Lord, and in so high services; for He puts thee upon nothing but what is neat, and what is honorable. Thou art as *a vessel of honor* in His house, for his best employments. Now, thou art not in pain



how to please this person and the other, nor needest thou vex thyself to gain men, to study their approbation and honor, nor to keep to thine own lusts and observe their will. Thou hast none but thy God to please in all ; and if He be pleased, thou mayest disregard who be displeased. His will is not fickle and changing as men's are, and as thine own is. He hath told thee what He likes and desires, and He alters not ; so that now, thou knowest whom thou hast to do withal, and what to do, whom to please, and what will please Him, and this cannot but much settle thy mind, and put thee at ease. Thou mayest say heartily, as rejoicing in the change of so many for one, and of such for such a One, as the Church says, Isa. xxvi. 13, *O Lord our God, other lords beside Thee have had dominion over me, but now, by Thee only will I make mention of Thy name ;* now, none but Thyself, not so much as the *name* of them any more, away with them : through Thy grace, Thou only shalt be my God. It cannot endure that anything be named with Thee.

#### The Life of the Living Christian.

Thus the renewed, the living Christian, is all for God, a sacrifice entirely offered up to God, and a *living sacrifice*, which lives to God. He takes no more notice of his own carnal will ; hath renounced that to embrace the holy will of God ; and therefore, though there is a contrary law and will in him, yet he does not acknowledge it, but only the law of Christ, as now established in him ; that law of love, by which he is sweetly and willingly led. Real obedience consults not now with flesh and blood, what will please them, but only inquires what will please his God, and knowing His mind, thus resolves to demur no more, nor to ask consent of any other ; that he will do, and it is reason enough to him : My Lord wills it, therefore, in His strength, I will do it ; for now I live to His will, it is my life to study and obey it.

Now, we know what is the true character of the redeemed of Christ, that they are freed from the service of themselves and of the world, yea, dead to it, and have no life but for God, as altogether His.

Let it, then, be our study and ambition to attain this, and to grow in it ; to be daily further freed from all other ways and desires, and more wholly addicted to the will of our God ; displeased when we find anything else stir or move within us but that, making that the spring of our notion in every work.

1. Because we know that His sovereign will is (and is most justly) the glory of his name, therefore we are not to rest till this be set up in our view, as our end in all things, and we are to account all our plausible doings as hateful, (as indeed they are,) which are not aimed at this end ; yea, endeavouring to have it as frequently and as expressly before us as we can, still keeping our



eye on the mark ; throwing away, yea, undoing our own interest, not seeking ourselves in anything, but Him in all.

2. As living to His will is in all things to be our end, so, in all the way to that end, it is to be the rule of every step. For we cannot attain His end but in His way ; nor can we attain it without a resignation of the way to his prescription, taking all our directions from Him, how we shall honor him in all. The soul that lives to Him, hath enough to make any thing not only warrantable but amiable in seeking His will ; and he not only does it, but delights to do it. This is to live to Him, to find it our life ; as we speak of a work wherein men do most, and with most delight employ themselves. That such a lust be crucified, is it thy will, Lord ? Then, no more advising, no more delay. How dear soever that was when I lived to it, it is now as hateful, seeing I live to Thee who hatest it. Wilt thou have me forget an injury, though a great one, and love the person that hath wronged me ? While I lived to myself and my passions, this had been hard. But now, how sweet is it ! seeing I live to Thee, and am glad to be put upon things most opposite to my corrupt heart : glad to trample upon my own will, to follow Thine. And this I daily aspire to and aim at, to have no will of my own, but that Thine be in me, that I may live to Thee, as one with Thee, and Thou my rule and delight ; yea, not to use the very natural comforts of my life, but for Thee ; to eat, and drink, and sleep for Thee ; and not to please myself, but to be enabled to serve and please Thee ; to make one offering of myself and all my actions, to Thee, my Lord.

Oh ! it is the only sweet life, to be living thus, and daily learning to live more fully thus ! It is in Heaven this, a little scantling of it here, and a pledge of whole Heaven. This is, indeed, the life of Christ, not only like His, but one with His ; it is His Spirit, His life derived into the soul, and, therefore, both the most excellent, and, certainly, the most permanent life, for *He dieth no more*, and therefore this His life cannot be extinguished. Hence is the perseverance of the saints ; because they have one life with Christ, and so are alive unto God, once for all, for ever.

The Converted Man, looking back upon the life spent in the Flesh to the lusts of Men.

Now, says the Christian, O corrupt lusts and deluding world, look for no more ; I have served you too long. The rest, whatsoever it is, must be to the Lord, to live to Him by whom I live ; and ashamed and grieved I am I was so long in beginning ; so much past, it may be the most of my short race past, before I took notice of God, or looked towards Him. Oh ! how have I lost, and worse than lost, all my by-past days ! Now had I the advantage and abilities of many men, and were I to live many ages, all should be to live to my God, and honour Him. And what strength I

have, and what time I shall have, through His grace, shall be wholly His. And when any Christian hath thus resolved, his intended life being so imperfect, and the time so short, the poorness of the offer would break his heart, were there not eternity before him, wherein he shall live to his God, and in Him, without blemish and without end.

Spiritual things being once discerned by a spiritual light, the whole soul is carried after them; and the ways of holiness are never truly sweet, till they be thoroughly embraced, and till there be a full renunciation of all that is contrary to them. All his former ways of wandering from God, are very hateful to a Christian who is indeed returned and brought home; and those are most of all hateful, wherein he hath most wandered and most delighted. A sight of Christ gains the heart, makes it break from all entanglements both of its own lusts, and of the profane world about it. And these are the two things the Apostle here aims at. Exhorting Christians to the study of newness of life, and showing the necessity of it, that they cannot be Christians without it, he opposes their new estate and engagement, to the old customs of their former condition, and to the continuing custom and conceit of the ungodly world, that against both, they may maintain that rank and dignity to which now they are called, and, in a holy disdain of both, walk as the redeemed of the Lord. Their own former custom he speaks to in these verses, and to the custom and opinion of the world, in those which follow. Both of these will set strong upon a man, especially while he is yet weak, and newly entered into that new estate.

Now, as to the first, his old acquaintance, his wonted lusts, will not fail to bestir themselves to accost him in their most obliging, familiar way, and represent their long-continued friendship. But the Christian, following the principles of his new being, will not entertain any long discourse with them, but cut them short, tell them that the change he hath made he avows, and finds it so happy, that these former delights may put off hopes of regaining him. No, they dress themselves in their best array, and put on all their ornaments, and say, as that known word of the courtesan, *I am the same I was*, the Christian will answer as he did, *I am not the same I was*. And not only thus will he turn off the plea of former acquaintance that sin makes, but turn it back upon it, as in his present thoughts, making much against it. The longer I was so deluded, the more reason now that I be wiser; the more time so mispent, the more pressing necessity of redeeming it. Oh! I have too long lived in that vile slavery. All was but husks I fed on. *I was laying out my money for that which was no bread, and my labor for that which satisfied not.* Isa. lv. 2. Now, I am on the pursuit of a good that I am sure will satisfy, will fill the largest desires of my soul; and shall I be sparing and slack, or shall

any thing call me off from it? Let it not be. I who took so much pains, early and late, to serve and sacrifice to so base a god, shall I not now live more to my new Lord, the living God, and sacrifice my time and strength, and my whole self, to Him?

And this is still the regret of the sensible Christian, that he cannot attain to that unwearied diligence and that strong bent of affection, in seeking communion with God, and living to Him, which once he had for the service of sin: he wonders that it should be thus with him, not to equal that which it were so reasonable that he should so far exceed.

It is, beyond expression, a thing to be lamented, that so small a number of men regard God, the author of their being, that so few live to Him in whom they live, returning that being and life they have, and all their enjoyments, as is due, to Him from whom they all flow. And then, how pitiful is it, that the small number who are thus minded, mind it so remissly and coldly, and are so far outstripped by the *children of this world*, who follow painted follies and lies with more eagerness and industry than the *children of wisdom* do that certain and solid blessedness which they seek after? *Plus illi ad vanitatem, quam nos ad veritatem*: They are more intent upon vanity, than we upon verity. Strange! that men should do so much violencey one to another, and to themselves in body and mind, for trifles and chaff; and that there is so little to be found of that allowed and commanded *violence, for a kingdom, and such a kingdom, that cannot be moved* (Heb. xii. 28;) a word too high for all the monarchies under the sun.

And should not our diligence and violence in this so worthy a design, be so much the greater, the later we begin to pursue it? They tell it of Cæsar, that when he passed into Spain, meeting there with Alexander's statue, it occasioned him to weep, considering that he was up so much more early, having performed so many conquests in those years, wherein he thought he himself had done nothing, and was yet but beginning. Truly, it will be a sad thought to a really renewed mind, to look back on the flower of youth and strength as lost in vanity; if not in gross profaneness, yet, in self-serving and self-pleasing, and in ignorance and neglect of God. And perceiving their few years so far spent ere they set out, they will account days precious, and make the more haste, and desire, with holy David, *enlarged hearts to run the way of God's commandments*. Psalm cxix. 32. They will study to live much in a little time; and, having lived all the past time to no purpose, will be sensible they have none now to spare upon the lusts and ways of the flesh, and vain societies and visits. Yea, they will be redeeming all they can even from their necessary affairs, for that which is more necessary than all other necessities, *that one thing needful*, to learn the will of our God, and live to it; this is our business, our *high calling*, the main and most excellent of all our employments.



We are to live for God and keep the mind Spiritual in our particular Calling.

Not that we are to cast off our particular callings, or omit due diligence in them; for that will prove a snare, and involve a person in things more opposite to godliness. But certainly, this *living to God* requires,

1. A fit measuring of thy own ability for affairs, and, as far as thou canst choose, fitting thy load to thy shoulders, not surcharging thyself with it. An excessive burden of businesses, either by the greatness or the multitude of them, will not fail to entangle thee and depress thy mind, and will hold it so down, that thou shalt not find it possible to walk upright and look upwards, with that freedom and frequency that becomes heirs of Heaven.

2. The measure of thy affairs being adapted, look to thy affection in them, that it be regulated too. Thy heart may be engaged in thy little business as much, if thou watch it not, as in many and great affairs. A man may drown in a little brook or pool, as well as in a great river, if he be down and plunge himself into it, and put his head under water. Some care thou must have, that thou mayest not care. Those things that are thorns indeed, thou must make a hedge of them, to keep out those temptations that accompany sloth, and extreme want that waits on it; but let them be the hedge: suffer them not to grow within the garden. *If riches increase, set not thy heart on them*, nor set them in thy heart. That place is due to Another, is made to be the garden of thy beloved Lord, made for the best plants and flowers, and there they ought to grow, the love of God, and faith, and meekness, and the other fragrant graces of the Spirit. And know, that this is no common nor easy matter, to keep the heart disengaged in the midst of affairs, that still it be reserved for Him whose right it is.

3. Not only labor to keep thy mind spiritual in itself, but by it put a spiritual stamp even upon thy temporal employments; and so thou shalt live to God, not only without prejudice of thy calling, but even in it, and shalt converse with Him in thy shop, or in the field, or in thy journey, doing all in obedience to Him, and offering all, and thyself withal, as a sacrifice to Him: thou still with Him, and he still with thee, in all. This is to live to the will of God indeed, to follow His direction, and intend His glory in all. Thus the wife, in the very oversight of her house, and the husband in his affairs abroad, may be living to God, raising their low employments to a high quality this way; Lord, even this mean work I do for Thee, complying with thy will, who hast put me in this station, and given me this task. *Thy will be done*. Lord, I offer up even this work to Thee. Accept of me, and of my desire to obey Thee in all. And as in their work, so, in their refreshments and rest, Christians do all for Him. *Whether ye eat or drink*, says the Apostle (1 Cor.



x. 31.) *or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*; doing all for this reason, because it is His will, and for this end, that He may have glory; bending the use of all our strength and all His mercies that way; setting this mark on all our designs and ways, This for the glory of my God, and, This further for His glory, and so from one thing to another throughout our whole life. This is the art of keeping the heart spiritual in all affairs, yea, of spiritualizing the affairs themselves in their use, that in themselves are earthly. This is the *elixir* that turns lower metal into gold, the mean actions of this life, in a Christian's hands, into obedience and holy offerings unto God.

And were we acquainted with the way of intermixing holy thoughts, ejaculatory eyeings of God, in our ordinary ways it would keep the heart in a sweet temper all the day long, and have an excellent influence into all our ordinary actions, and holy performances, at those times when we apply ourselves solemnly to them. Our hearts would be near them, not so far off to seek and call in, as usually they are through the neglect of this. This were to *walk with God* indeed; to go all the day long as in our Father's hand; whereas, without this, our praying morning and evening looks but as a formal visit, not delighting in that constant converse which yet is our happiness and honor, and makes all estates sweet. This would refresh us in the hardest labor; as they that carry the spices from Arabia are refreshed with the smell of them in their journey, and some observe, that it keeps their strength, and frees them from fainting.

#### THE OPPOSITE COURSE OF CHRISTIANS AND CARNAL MEN.

Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you; Who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

Grace, until it reach its home and end in glory, is still in conflict; there is a restless party within and without, yea, the whole world against it. It is a stranger here, and is accounted and used as such. *They think it strange that you run not with them, and they speak evil of you*: these wondering thoughts they vent in reproaching words.

In these two verses we have these three things: 1. The Christian's opposite course to that of the world. 2. The World's opposite thoughts and speeches of this course. 3. The supreme and final judgment of both.

1. The opposite course, in that *They run to excesses of riot—You run not with them*. They run to excesses of riot or luxury. Though all natural men are not, in the grossest kind, guilty of this, yet they are all of them in some way truly riotous or luxurious, lavishing away themselves, and their days, upon the poor perishing delights of sin, each according to his own palate and

humor. As all persons that are riotous, in the common sense of it, gluttons or drunkards, do not love the same kind of meats or drink, but have several relishes or appetites, yet they agree in the nature of the sin; so the notion enlarged after that same manner, to the different custom of corrupt nature, takes in all the ways of sin: some are glutting in, and continually drunk with pleasures and carnal enjoyments; others, with the cares of this life, which our Saviour reckons with surfeiting and drunkenness, as being a kind of it, and surcharging the heart as they do: as there he expresses it, Luke xxi. 34, *Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life.* Whatsoever it is that draws away the heart from God, that, how plausible soever, doth debauch and destroy us: we spend and undo ourselves upon it, as the word signifies, a making havoc of all. And the other word, signifies profusion, and dissolute lavishing, a pouring out of the affections upon vanity: they are scattered and defiled as water spilt upon the ground, that cannot be cleansed nor gathered up again. And, indeed, it passes all our skill and strength, to recover and recollect our hearts for God; He only can do it for himself. He who made it can gather it, and cleanse it, and make it anew, and unite it to Himself. O! what a scattered, broken, unstable thing is the carnal heart, till it be changed, falling in love with every gay folly it meets withal, and running out to rest profusely upon things like its vain self, which suit and agree with it, and serve its lusts! It can dream and muse upon these long enough, upon anything that feeds the earthliness or pride of it; it can be prodigal of hours, and let out floods of thoughts, where a little is too much, but is bounded and straitened where all are too little; hath not one fixed thought in a whole day to spare for God.

And truly, this *running out* of the heart is a continual drunkenness and madness: it is not capable of reason, and will not be stopped in its current by any persuasion; it is *mad upon its idols*, as the Prophet speaks. Jer. l. 38. You may as well speak to a river in its course, and bid it stay, as speak to an impenitent sinner in the course of his iniquity; and all the other means you can use, is but as the putting of your finger to a rapid stream to stay it. But there is a Hand that can both stop and turn the most impetuous torrent of the heart, be it even *the heart of a king*, which will least endure any other controlment. Prov. xxi. 1.

Now, as the ungodly world naturally moves to this profusion with a strong and swift motion, *runs* to it, so, it *runs together* to it, and that makes the current both the stronger and the swifter; as a number of brooks falling into one main channel, make a mighty stream. And every man, naturally is, in his birth, and in the course of his life, just as a brook, that of itself is carried to that stream of sin which is in the world, and then falling into it,

is carried rapidly along with it. And if every sinner, taken apart be so incontrovertible by all created power, how much more hard a task is a public reformation, the turning of a land from its course of wickedness! All that is set to dam up their way, doth at the best but stay them a little, and they swell, and rise, and run over with more noise and violence than if they had not been stopped. Thus we find outward restraints prove, and thus the very public judgments of God on us. They may have made a little interruption, but, upon the abatement of them, the course of sin, in all kinds, seems to be now more fierce, as it were, to regain the time lost in that constrained forbearance. So that we see the need of much prayer to entreat his powerful hand, that can turn the course of Jordan, that He would work, not a temporary, but an abiding change of the course of this land, and cause many souls to look upon Jesus Christ and flow into Him, as the word is in Psal. xxxiv. 5.

This is their course, but *you run not with them*. The godly are a small and weak company, and yet, run counter to the grand torrent of the world, just against them. And there is a Spirit within them, whence that their contrary motion flows; a Spirit strong enough to maintain it in them, against all the crowd and combined course of the ungodly. *Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.* 1 John iv. 4. As Lot in Sodom, his righteous soul was not carried with them, but was *vexed with their ungodly doings*. There is, to a believer, the example of Christ, to set against the example of the world, and the Spirit of Christ, against the spirit of the world; and these are by far the more excellent and the stronger. Faith looking to Him, and drawing virtue from Him, makes the soul surmount all discouragements and oppositions. So, Heb. xii. 2: *Looking to Jesus:* and that not only as an example worthy to oppose to all the world's examples; the saints were so, yet He more than they all; but further, He is *the Author and Finisher of our Faith*; and so we eye Him, as having *endured the cross, and despised the shame*, and as having *sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*, not only that, in doing so, we may follow Him in that way, unto that end, as our Pattern, but as our Head, from whom we borrow our strength so to follow *the Author and Finisher of our Faith*. And so, 1 John v. 4: *This is our victory, whereby we overcome the world, even our faith.*

The Spirit of God shews the Believer clearly both the baseness of the ways of sin, and the wretched measure of their end. That Divine light discovers the fading and false blush of the pleasures of sin, that there is nothing under them but true deformity and rottenness, which the deluded, gross world does not see, but takes the first appearance of it for true and solid beauty, and so is enamored with a painted strumpet. And as he sees the vileness of



that love of sin, he sees the final unhappiness of it, that *her ways lead to the chambers of death*. Methinks a believer is as one standing upon a high tower, who sees the way wherein the world runs, in a valley, as an unavoidable precipice, a steep edge hanging over the bottomless pit, where all that are not reclaimed, fall over before they be aware; this they, in their low way, perceive not, and therefore walk and run on in the smooth pleasures and ease of it towards their perdition; but he that sees the end, will not *run with them*.

And as he hath, by that light of the Spirit, this clear reason for thinking on and taking another course, so, by that Spirit, he hath a very natural bent to a contrary motion, so that he cannot be one with them. That Spirit moves him upwards whence it came, and makes that, in so far as he is renewed, his natural motion. Though he hath a clog of flesh that cleaves to him, and so breeds him some difficulty, yet, in the strength of that new nature, he overcomes it, and goes on till he attain his end where all the difficulty in the way presently is over-rewarded and forgotten. This makes amends for every weary step, that every one of those who walk in that way, shall *appear in Zion before God*. Psal. lxxxiv. 6.

#### Their Opposite Thoughts and Speeches.

We have their opposite thoughts and speeches of each other. *They think it strange, speaking evil of you*. The Christian and the carnal man are most wonderful to each other. The one wonders to see the other walk so strictly, and deny himself to those carnal liberties which the most take, and take for so necessary, that they think that they could not live without them. And the Christian thinks it strange that men should be so bewitched, and still remain children in the vanity of their turmoil, wearying and humoring themselves from morning to night, running after stories and fancies, ever busy doing nothing; wonders that the delights of earth and sin can so long entertain and please men, and persuade them to give Jesus Christ so many refusals, to turn from their life and happiness, and choose to be miserable, yea, and take much pains to make themselves miserable. He knows the depravedness and blindness of nature in this; knows it by himself, that once he was so, and therefore wonders not so much at them as they do at him; yet, the unreasonableness and frenzy of that course now appears to him in so strong a light that he cannot but wonder at these woful mistakes. But the ungodly wonder far more at him, not knowing the inward cause of his different choice and way. The believer, as we said, is upon the hill; he is going up, and looking back on them in the valley, sees their way tending to, and ending in death, and calls them to retire from it as loud as he can; he tells them the danger, but either they hear not, nor understand his language, or will not believe him:

finding present ease and delight in their way, they will not consider and suspect the end of it, but they judge him the fool who will not share with them, and take that way where such multitudes go, and with such ease, and some of them with their train, and horses, and coaches, and all their pomp, while he, and a few straggling poor creatures, like him, are climbing up a craggy steep hill, and will by no means come off from that way, and partake of theirs; not knowing, or not believing that at the top of that hill he climbs, is that happy glorious city *the new Jerusalem*, whereof he is a citizen, and whither he is tending; not believing that he knows the end both of their way and of his own, and therefore would reclaim them if he could, but will by no means *return unto them*: as the Lord commanded the prophet, *Let them return unto thee, but return thou not unto them.* Jer. xv. 19.

The world thinks it strange that a Christian can spend so much time in secret prayer, not knowing, nor being able to conceive of the sweetness of the communion with God which he attains in that way. Yea, while he feels it not, how sweet it is, beyond the world's enjoyments, to be but seeking after it, and waiting for it! Oh the delight that there is in the bitterest exercise of repentance, in the very fears, much more in the succeeding harvest of joy! *Incontinentes veræ voluptatis ignari*, says Aristotle: The intemperate are strangers to true pleasure. It is strange unto a carnal man, to see the child of God disdain the pleasures of sin; he knows not the higher and purer delights and pleasures that the Christian is called to, and of which he hath, it may be, some part at present, but, however, the fulness of them in assured hope.

The strangeness of the world's way to the Christian, and of his to it, though that is somewhat unnatural, yet affects them very differently. He looks on the deluded sinner with pity, they on him with hate. Their part, which is here expressed, of wondering, breaks out in reviling: *they speak evil of you*; and what is their voice? What mean these precise fools? will they readily say. What course is this they take, contrary to all the world? Will they make a new religion, and condemn all their honest, civil neighbors that are not like them? Ay, forsooth, do all go to hell, think you, except you, and those that follow your way? We are for no more than good-fellowship and liberty; and as for so much reading and praying, those are but brain-sick, melancholy conceits: a man may go to heaven like his neighbor, without all this ado. Thus they let fly at their pleasure. But this troubles not the composed Christian's mind at all: while curs snarl and bark about him, the sober traveller goes on his way, and regards them not. He that is acquainted with the way of holiness, can more than endure the counter-blasts and airs of scoffs and revilings; he accounts them his glory and his riches. So Moses *esteemed the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.*

The Gospel preached, and the manner in which most of us hear it.

How sounds it, to many of us at least, but as a well-contrived story, whose use is to amuse us, and possibly delight us a little, and there is an end,—and indeed no end, for this turns the most serious and most glorious of all messages into an empty sound. If we awake, and give it a hearing, it is much : but for anything further, how few deeply beforehand consider : I have a dead heart ; therefore will I go unto the word of life, that it may be quickened. It is frozen ; I will go and lay it before the warm beams of that Sun which shines in the Gospel. My corruptions are mighty and strong, and grace, if there be any in my heart, is exceeding weak ; but there is in the Gospel a power to weaken and kill sin, and to strengthen grace, and this being the intent of my wise God in appointing it, it shall be my desire and purpose in resorting to it, to find it to me according to His gracious design ; to have faith in my Christ, the fountain of my life, more strengthened, and made more active in drawing from him ; to have my heart more refined and spiritualized, and to have the sluice of repentance opened, and my affections to Divine things enlarged, more hatred of sin, and more love of God and communion with Him.

Ask yourselves concerning former times ; and, to take yourselves even now, inquire within, Why came I hither this day ? What had I in mine eye and desires this morning ere I came forth, and in my way as I was coming ? Did I seriously propound an end, or not ; and what was my end ? Nor doth the mere custom of mentioning this in prayer, satisfy the question ; for this, as other such things usually do in our hand, may turn to a lifeless form, and have no heat of spiritual affection, none of David's panting and breathing after God in his ordinances ; such desires as will not be stilled without a measure of attainment, as the child's desire of the breast, as our Apostle resembles it, chap. ii. v. 1.

And then again, being returned home, reflect on your hearts : Much hath been heard, but is there any thing done by it ? Have I gained my point ? It was not simply to pass a little time that I went, or to pass it with delight in hearing, *rejoicing in that light*, as they did in St. John Baptist's *for a season*, as long as the hour lasts. It was not to have my ear pleased, but my heart changed : not to learn some new notions, and carry them cold in my head, but to be quickened, and purified, and *renewed in the spirit of my mind*. Is this done ? Think I now with greater esteem of Christ, and the life of faith, and the happiness of a Christian ? And are such thoughts solid and abiding with me ? What sin have I left behind ? What grace of the Spirit have I brought home ? Or what new degree, or, at least, new desire of it, a living desire, that will follow its point ? Oh ! this were good repetition.



It is a strange folly in multitudes of us, to set ourselves no mark, to propound no end in the hearing of the Gospel. The merchant sails, not merely that he may sail, but for traffic, and traffics that he may be rich. The husbandman plows not merely to keep himself busy with no further end, but plows that he may sow, and sows that he may reap with advantage. And shall we do the most excellent and fruitful work fruitlessly, hear only to hear, and look no farther? This is indeed a great vanity, and a great misery, to lose that labor, and gain nothing by it, which duly used, would be of all others most advantageous and gainful: and yet all meetings are full of this!

*Now is the accepted Time, To-day the day of Salvation.*

This is our season of enjoying the sweetness of the Gospel. Others heard it before us in the places which now we fill; and now they are removed, and we must remove shortly, and leave our places to others, to speak and hear in. It is high time we were considering what we do here, to what end we speak and hear; high time to lay hold on that salvation which is held forth unto us, and that we may lay hold on it, to let go our hold of sin and those perishing things that we hold so firm, and cleave so fast to. Do they that are dead, who heard and obeyed the Gospel, now repent of their repentance and mortifying of the flesh? Or rather, do they not think ten thousand times more pains, were it for many ages, all too little for a moment of that which now they enjoy, and shall enjoy to eternity? And they that are dead, who heard the Gospel and slighted it, if such a thing might be, what would they give for one of those opportunities which now we daily have, and daily lose, and have no fruit or esteem of them! You have lately seen, at least many of you, and you that shifted the sight, have heard of numbers, cut off in a little time, whole families swept away by the late stroke of God's hand,\* many of which did think no other but that they might have still been with you here in this place and exercise, at this time, and many years after this. And yet, who hath laid to heart the lengthening out of his day, and considered it more as an opportunity of securing that higher and happier life, than as a little protracting of this wretched life, which is hastening to an end? Oh! therefore be entreated *to-day, while it is called To-day, not to harden your hearts.* Though the pestilence doth not now affright you so, yet, that standing mortality, and the decay of these earthen lodges, tells us that shortly we shall cease to preach and hear this Gospel. Did we consider, it would excite us to a more earnest search after our evidences of that eternal life that is set before us in the Gospel; and we should seek them in the characters of that spiritual

\* A. D 1665.

life which is the beginning of eternal life within us, and is wrought by the Gospel in all the heirs of salvation.

Think therefore wisely of these two things, of what is the proper end of the Gospel, and of the approaching end of thy days; and let thy certainty of this latter, drive thee to seek more certainty of the former, that thou mayest partake of it: and then, this again will make the thoughts of the other sweet to thee. That visage of death, that is so terrible to unchanged sinners, shall be amiable to thine eye. Having found a life in the Gospel as happy and lasting as this is miserable and vanishing, and seeing the perfection of that life on the other side of death, thou wilt long for the passage.

Be more serious in this matter of daily hearing the Gospel. Consider why it is sent to thee, and what it brings, and think—It is too long I have slighted its message, and many who have done so are cut off, and shall hear it no more; I have it once more inviting me, and to me this may be the last invitation. And in these thoughts, ere you come, bow your knee to the Father of Spirits, that this one thing may be granted you, that your souls may find at length the lively and mighty power of his Spirit upon yours, in the hearing of this Gospel, that *you may be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit.*

Means of knowing whether we are Christians or not.

Now, if this life be in thee, it will act. All life is in motion, and is called *an act*, but most active of all is this most excellent, and, as I may call it, most lively life. It will be moving towards God, often seeking to Him, making still towards Him as its principle and fountain, exerting itself in holy and affectionate thoughts of Him; sometimes on one of His sweet attributes, sometimes on another, as the bee amongst the flowers. And as it will thus act within, so it will be outwardly laying hold on all occasions, yea, seeking out ways and opportunities to be serviceable to thy Lord; employing all for Him, commending and extolling His goodness, doing and suffering cheerfully for Him, laying out the strength of desires, and parts, and means, in thy station, to gain Him glory. If thou be alone, then not esteeming thyself alone, but with Him, seeking to know more of Him, and to be made more like Him. If in company, then casting about how to bring His name into esteem, and to draw others to a love of religion and holiness by speeches, as it may be fit, and most by the true behavior of thy carriage;—tender over the souls of others, to do them good to thy utmost; thinking, each day, an hour lost when thou art not busy for the honor and advantage of Him to whom thou now livest:—thinking in the morning, Now what may I do this day for my God? How may I most please and glorify Him, and use my

strength, and wit, and my whole self, as not mine, but His? And then, in the evening, reflecting, O Lord, have I seconded these thoughts in reality? What glory hast thou had by me this day? Whither went my thoughts and endeavors? What busied them most? Have I been much with God? Have I adorned the Gospel in my converse with others?—And if thou findest any thing done this way, this life will engage thee to bless and acknowledge Him, the spring and worker of it. If thou hast stepped aside, were it but to an *appearance of evil*, or if any fit season of good hath escaped thee unprofitably, it will lead thee to check thyself, and to be grieved for thy sloth and coldness, and to see if more love would not beget more diligence.

Try it by sympathy and antipathy, which follow the nature of things; as we see in some plants and creatures that cannot grow, cannot agree together, and others that do favor and benefit mutually. If thy soul hath an aversion and reluctancy against whatever is contrary to holiness, it is an evidence of this new nature and life; thy heart rises against wicked ways and speeches, oaths and cursings, and rotten communication; yet, thou canst not endure unworthy discourses, wherein most spend their time: thou findest no relish in the unsavory societies of such as know not God, canst not *sit with vain persons*, but findest a delight in those who have the image of God upon them, such as partake of that Divine life, and carry the evidences of it in their carriage. David did not disdain the fellowship of the saints, and that it was no disparagement to him is implied in the name he gives them, Psal. xvi. 2, *the excellent ones*, the magnific or noble, *adiri*: that word is taken from one that signifies a robe or noble garment, *adereth*, *toga magnifica*; so he thought them nobles and kings as well as he; they had *robes royal*, and therefore were fit companions of kings. A spiritual eye looks upon spiritual dignity, and esteems and loves them who are *born of God*, how low soever be their natural birth and breeding. The sons of God have of His Spirit in them, and are born to the same inheritance, where all shall have enough, and they are tending homewards by the conduct of the same Spirit that is in them; so that there must be amongst them a real complacency and delight in one another.

And then, consider the temper of thy heart towards spiritual things, the word and ordinances of God whether thou dost esteem highly of them, and delight in them; whether there be complacency of the heart with Divine truths, something in thee, that suits and sides with them against thy corruptions; whether in thy affliction thou seekest not to the puddles of earthly comforts, but hast thy recourse to the sweet crystal streams of the Divine promises, and findest refreshment in them. It may be, at some times, in a spiritual distemper, holy exercises and ordinances will not have their present sensible sweetness to a Christian, that he desires.



and some will for a long time lie under dryness and deadness this way ; yet, there is here an evidence of this spiritual life, that thou stayest by the Lord and reliest on Him, and wilt not leave these holy means, how sapless soever to thy sense for the present. Thou findest for a long time little sweetness in prayer, yet thou prayest still, and, when thou canst say nothing, yet offerest at it, and look-est towards Christ thy life. Thou dost not turn away from these things to seek consolation elsewhere, but as thou knowest that life is in Christ, thou wilt stay till He refresh thee with new and lively influence. It is not any where but in Him ; as St. Peter said, *Lord, whither should we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life.* John vi. 68.

Consider with thyself, whether thou hast any knowledge of the growth or deficiencies of this spiritual life ; for it is here but begun, and breathes in an air contrary to it, and lodges in a house that often smokes and darkens it. Canst thou go on in formal performances, from one year to another, and make no advancement in the inward exercises of grace, and retest thou content with that ? It is no good sign. But art thou either gaining victories over sin, and further strength of faith and love, and other graces, or, at least, art thou earnestly seeking these, and bewailing thy wants and disappointments of this kind ? Then thou livest. At the worst, wouldest thou rather grow this way, be farther off from sin, and nearer to God, than grow in thy estate, or credit or honors ? Esteemest thou more highly of grace than of the whole world ? There is life at the root ; although thou findest not that flourishing thou desirest ; yet, the desire of it is life in thee. And, if growing this way art thou content, whatsoever is thy outward estate ? Canst thou solace thyself in the love and goodness of thy God, though the world frown on thee ? Art thou unable to take comfort in the smiles of the world, when His face is hid ? This tells thee thou livest, and that He is thy life.

Although many Christians have not so much sensible joy, yet they account spiritual joy and the light of God's countenance the only true joy, and all other without it, madness ; and they cry, and sigh, and wait for it. Meanwhile, not only duty and the hopes of attaining a better state in religion, but even love to God, makes them to do so, to serve, and please, and glorify him to their utmost. And this is not a dead resting without God, but it is a stable compliance with His will in the highest point ; waiting for Him, and living by faith, which is most acceptable to Him. In a word, whether in sensible comfort or without it, still, this is the fixed thought of a believing soul. *It is good for me to draw nigh to God,* Psalm lxxiii. 28 ;—only good ; and it will not live in a willing estrangedness from Him, what way soever He be pleased to deal with it.

## Means of Increasing in Grace.

Now, for the entertaining and strengthening of this life, which is the great business and care of all that have it,—

1st. Beware of omitting and interrupting those spiritual means, which do provide it and nourish it. Little neglects of that kind will draw on greater, and great neglects will make great abatements of vigor and liveliness. Take heed of using holy things coldly and lazily, without affection: that will make them fruitless, and our life will not be advantaged by them, unless they be used in a lively way. Be active in all good within thy reach: as this is a sign of the spiritual life, so it is a helper and friend to it. A slothful, unstimulating life, will make a sickly, unhealthful life. Motion purifies and sharpens the spirits, and makes men robust and vigorous.

2ndly. Beware of admitting a correspondence with any sin; yea, do not so much as discourse familiarly with it, or look kindly toward it; for that will undoubtedly cast a damp upon thy spirit, and diminish thy graces at least, and will obstruct thy communion with God. Thou knowest (thou who hast any knowledge of this life) that thou canst not go to Him with that sweet freedom thou wert wont, after thou has been but tempering or parleying with any of thy old loves. Oh! do not make so foolish a bargain, as to prejudice the least of thy spiritual comforts, for the greatest and longest continued enjoyments of sin, which are base and but for a season.

But wouldst thou grow upwards in this life? Alas, Have much recourse to Jesus Christ thy head, the spring from whom flow the animal spirits that quicken thy soul. Wouldst thou know more of God? He it is who *reveals the Father*, and reveals Him as *His Father*, and, in Him, *thy Father*; and that is the sweet notion of God. Wouldst thou overcome thy lusts further. Our victory is in Him. Apply His conquest; *We are more than conquerors through him that loved us*. Rom. viii. 37. Wouldst thou be more replenished with graces and spiritual affections? His fullness is, for that use, open to us; there is life, and more life, in Him, and for us. This was His business here. He came, *that we might have life, and might have it more abundantly*. John x. 10.

## Prayer.

Truly, to speak and to hear of this duty often, were our hearts truly and entirely acquainted with it, would have still new sweetness and usefulness in it. Oh, how great were the advantage of that lively knowledge of it, beyond the exactest skill in defining it, and in discoursing on the heads of doctrine concerning it!

Prayer is not a smooth expression, or a well-contrived form of

words; not the product of a ready memory, or of a rich invention exerting itself in the performance. These may draw a neat picture of it, but still, the life is wanting. The motion of the heart God-wards, holy and divine affection, makes prayer real, and lively, and acceptable to the Living God, to whom it is presented; the pouring out of thy heart to Him who made it, and therefore hears it, and understands what it speaks, and how it is moved and affected in calling on Him. It is not the gilded paper and good writing of a petition, that prevails with a king, but the moving sense of it. And to that King who discerns the heart, heart-sense is the sense of all, and that which only He regards: He listens to hear what that speaks, and takes all as nothing where that is silent. All other excellence in Prayer, is but the outside and fashion of it; this is the life of it.

Prayer Strengthens all the Christian Graces.

All the graces of the Spirit are, in Prayer, stirred and exercised, and, by exercise, strengthened and increased; Faith, in applying the Divine promises, which are the very ground that the soul goes upon to God, Hope looking out to their performance, and Love particularly expressing itself in that sweet converse, and delighting in it, as love doth in the company of the person beloved, thinking all hours too short in speaking with Him. Oh, how the soul is refreshed with freedom of speech with its beloved Lord! And as it delights in that, so it is continually advanced and grows by each meeting and conference, beholding the excellency of God, and relishing the pure and sublime pleasures that are to be found in near communion with Him. Looking upon the Father in the face of Christ, and using Him as a Mediator in prayer, as still it must, it is drawn to further admiration of that bottomless love, which found out that way of agreement, that *new and living way* of our access, when all was shut up, and we must otherwise have been shut out forever. And then, the affectionate expressions of that reflex love, seeking to find that vent in prayer, do kindle higher, and being as it were fanned and blown up, rise to a greater, and higher, and purer flame, and so tend upwards the more strongly. David, as he doth profess his love to God in prayer, in his Psalms, so no doubt it grew in the expressing; *I will love thee, O Lord my strength*, Psal. xviii. 1. And in Psal. cxvi. 1, he doth raise an incentive of love out of this very consideration of the correspondence of prayer—*I love the Lord because he hath heard*; and he resolves thereafter upon persistence in that course,—*therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live*. And as the graces of the Spirit are advanced in prayer by their actings, so for this further reason, because prayer sets the soul particularly near unto God in Jesus Christ. It is then in His presence, and be-



ing much with God in this way, it is powerfully assimilated to Him by converse with Him; as we readily contract their habits with whom we have much intercourse, especially if they be such as we singularly love and respect. Thus the soul is moulded further to the likeness of God, is stamped with clearer characters of Him, by being much with Him, becomes more like God, more holy and spiritual, and, like Moses, brings back a bright shining from the mount.

Prayer is the appointed Means by which we receive the Blessing.

And not only thus, by a natural influence, doth Prayer work this advantage, but even by a federal efficacy, suing for, and upon suit obtaining, supplies of grace as the chief good, and besides, all other needful mercies. It is a real means of receiving. *Whatsoever you shall ask, that will I do*, says our Saviour. John xiv. 13. God having established this intercourse, has engaged His truth and goodness in it, that if they call on Him, they shall be heard and answered. If they prepare the heart to call, he will incline His ear to hear. Our Saviour hath assured us, that we may build upon his goodness, upon the affection of a father in Him; *He will give good things to them that ask*, says one Evangelist, (Matt. vii. 11,) *give them the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him*, says another, (Luke xi. 13,) as being *the good* indeed, the highest of gifts and the sum of all good things, and that for which His children are most earnest supplicants. Prayer for grace doth, as it were, set the mouth of the soul to the spring, draws from Jesus Christ, and is replenished out of his fulness, thirsting after it, and drawing from it that way.

And for this reason it is that our Saviour, and from him, and according to his example, the Apostles, recommend prayer so much. *Watch and pray*, says our Saviour, Matt. xxvi. 41; and St. Paul, *Pray continually*, 1 Thess. v. 17. And our Apostle here particularly specifies this, as the grand means of attaining that conformity with Christ which he presses: this is the highway to it, *Be sober and watch unto prayer*. He that is much in prayer, shall grow rich in grace. He shall thrive and increase most, who is busiest in this, which is our very traffic with heaven, and fetches the most precious commodities thence. He who sends oftenest out these ships of *desire*, who makes the most voyages to that land of spices and pearls, shall be sure to improve his stock most, and have most of heaven upon earth.

But the true art of this trading is very rare. Every trade hath something wherein the skill of it lies; but this is deep and supernatural, is not reached by human industry. Industry is to be used in it; but we must know the faculty of it comes from above, that Spirit of prayer without which, learning, and wit, and reli-

gious breeding, can do nothing. Therefore, this is to be our prayer often, our great suit, for the spirit of prayer, that we may speak the language of the sons of God by the Spirit of God, which alone teaches the heart to pronounce aright those things that the tongue of many hypocrites can articulate well to man's ear. Only the children, in that right strain that takes Him, call God their *Father*, and cry unto Him as their Father; and therefore, many a poor unlettered Christian far outstrips your school-rabbies in this faculty, because it is not effectually taught in those lower academies. They must be in God's own school, children of His house, who speak this language. Men may give spiritual rules and directions in this, and such as may be useful, drawn from the word that furnishes us with all needful precepts: but you have still to bring these into the seat of this faculty of prayer, the heart, and stamp them upon it, and so to teach it to pray, without which there is no prayer. This is the prerogative royal of Him who framed the heart of man within him.

But for advancing in this, and growing more skilful in it, Prayer is, with continual dependence on the Spirit, to be much used. Praying much, thou shalt be blest with much faculty for it. So then, askest thou, What shall I do that I may learn to pray? There be things here to be considered, which are expressed as serving this end; but for the present take this, and chiefly this, By praying, thou shalt learn to pray.—Thou shalt both obtain more of the Spirit, and find more of the cheerful working of it in in prayer, when thou puttest it often to that work for which it is received, and wherein it takes delight. And, as both advantaging all other graces and promoting the grace of prayer itself, this frequency and abounding in prayer is here very clearly intended, in that the Apostle makes it as the main of the work we have to do, and would have us keep our hearts in a constant aptness for it: *Be sober and watch—to what end?—unto prayer.*

#### Christian Sobriety.

They that have no better, must make the best they can of carnal delights. It is no wonder they take as large a share of them as they can bear, and sometimes more. But the Christian is called to a more excellent state and higher pleasures; so that he may behold men glutting themselves with these base things, and be as little moved to share with them, as men are taken with the pleasure a swine hath in wallowing in the mire.

It becomes the heirs of heaven to be far above the love of the earth, and in the necessary use of any earthly things, still to keep within the due measure of their use, and to keep their hearts wholly disengaged from an excessive affection to them. This is the Sobriety to which we are here exhorted.

It is true, that in the most common sense of the word, it is very commendable, and it is fit to be so considered by a Christian, that he flee gross intemperance, as a thing most contrary to his condition and holy calling, and wholly inconsistent with the spiritual temper of a renewed mind, with those exercises to which it is called, and with its progress in its way homewards. It is a most unseemly sight, to behold one simply by outward profession a Christian, overtaken with surfeiting and drunkenness, much more, given to the vile custom of it. All sensual delights, even the filthy lust of uncleanness, go under the common name of insobriety, intemperance, and they all degrade and destroy the noble soul, being unworthy of a man, much more of a Christian; and the contempt of them preserves the soul and elevates it.

But the Sobriety here recommended, though it takes in that too yet reaches farther than temperance in meat and drink. It is the spiritual temperance of a Christian mind in all earthly things, as our Saviour joins these together, Luke xxi. 34, *surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life*: and under the *cares* are comprehended all the excessive desires and delights of this life, which cannot be followed and attended without distempered carefulness.

Many who are sober men and of temperate diet, yet are spiritually intemperate, drunk with pride, or covetousness, or passions; drunk with self-love and love of their pleasures and ease, with love of the world and the things of it, which cannot consist with the love of God, as St. John tells us, 1 John ii. 15; drunk with the inordinate, unlawful love even of their lawful calling and the lawful gain they pursue by it. Their hearts are still going after it, and so, reeling to and fro, never fixed on God and heavenly things, but either hurried up and down with incessant business, or, if sometimes at ease, it is as the ease of a drunken man, not composed to better and wiser thoughts, but falling into a dead sleep, contrary to the watching here joined with sobriety.

#### Christian Watchfulness.

There is a Christian rule to be observed in the very moderating of bodily sleep, and that particularly for the interest of prayer; but watching, as well as sobriety, here, implies chiefly the spiritual circumspectness and vigilancy of the mind, in a wary, waking posture, that it be not surprised by the assaults or sleights of Satan, by the World, nor by its nearest and most deceiving enemy, the corruption that dwells within, which being so near, doth most readily watch unperceived advantages, and easily circumvent us. Heb. xii. 1. The soul of a Christian being surrounded with enemies, both of so great power and wrath, and so watchful to undo it, should it not be watchful for its own safety, and live in a military vigilancy continually, keeping constant watch and sentinel,



and suffering nothing to pass that may carry the least suspicion of danger? Should he not be distrustful and jealous of all the motions of his own heart, and the smilings of the world? And in relation to these, it will be a wise course to take that word as a good caveat, *Be watchful, and remember to mistrust.* Under the garment of some harmless pleasure, or some lawful liberties, may be conveyed into thy soul some thief or traitor, that will either betray thee to the enemy, or at least pilfer and steal of the most precious things thou hast. Do we not by experience find, how easily our foolish hearts are seduced and deceived, and therefore apt to deceive themselves? And by things that seem to have no evil in them, they are yet drawn from the height of affection to their Supreme Good, and from communion with God, and study to please Him; which should not be intermitted, for then it will abate, whereas it ought still to be growing.

The mutual relation of Sobriety, Watchfulness, and Prayer; and the profitableness of being incessant in Prayer.

The *mutual relation* of these duties is clear: they are each of them assistant and helpful to the other, and are in their nature inseparably linked together, as they are here in the words of the Apostle; *Sobriety*, the friend of *watchfulness*, and *prayer*, of both. Intemperance doth of necessity draw on sleep: excessive eating and drinking, by sending up too many, and so, gross vapors, surcharge the brain; and when the body is thus deadened, how unfit is it for any active employment. Thus the mind, by a surcharge of delights, or desires, or cares of earth, is made so heavy and dull, that it cannot awake; hath not the spiritual activity and clearness that spiritual exercises, particularly prayer, do require. Yea, as bodily insobriety, full feeding and drinking, not only for the time indisposes to action, but, by the custom of it, brings the body to so gross and heavy a temper, that the very natural spirits cannot stir to and fro in it with freedom, but are clogged, and stick as the wheels of a coach in a deep miry way; thus is it with the soul glutted with earthly things: the affections bemired with them, make it sluggish and inactive in spiritual things, and render the motions of the spirit heavy; and, obstructed thus, the soul grows carnally secure and sleepy, and prayer comes heavily off. But when the affections are soberly exercised, and even in lawful things, have not full liberty, with the reigns laid on their necks, to follow the world and carnal projects and delights; when the unavoidable affairs of this life are done with a spiritual mind, a heart kept free and disengaged; then is the soul more nimble for spiritual things, for Divine meditation and prayer: it can watch and continue in these things, and spend itself in that excellent way with more alacrity.

Again, as this Sobriety, and the watchful temper attending it, enable for prayer, so prayer preserves these. Prayer winds up the soul from the earth, raises it above those things which intemperance feeds on, acquaints it with the transcending sweetness of Divine comforts, the love and loveliness of Jesus Christ; and these most powerfully wean the soul from the low creeping pleasures that the world gapes after and swallows with such greediness. He that is admitted to nearest intimacy with the king, and is called daily to his presence, not only in the view and company of others, but likewise in secret, will he be so mad as to sit down and drink with the kitchen-boys, or the common guards so far below what he may enjoy? Surely not.

Prayer, being our near communion with the great God, certainly sublimates the soul, and makes it look down upon the base ways of the world with disdain, and despise the truly besotting pleasures of it. Yea, the Lord doth sometimes fill those souls that converse much with Him, with such beatific delights, such inebriating sweetness, as I may call it, that it is, in a happy manner, drunk with these; and the more there is of this, the more is the soul above base intemperance in the use of the delights of the world. Whereas common drunkenness makes a man less than a man, this makes him more than a man: that sinks him below himself, makes him a beast; this raises him above himself, and makes him an angel.

Would you, as surely you ought, have much faculty for prayer, and be frequent in it, and experience much of the pure sweetness of it? Then, deny yourselves more the muddy pleasures and sweetness of the world. If you would pray much, and with much advantage, then *be sober, and watch unto prayer*. Suffer not your hearts to long so after ease, and wealth, and esteem in the world; these will make your hearts, if they mix with them, become like them, and take their quality; will make them gross and earthly, and unable to mount up; will clog the wings of prayer, and you shall find the loss, when your soul is heavy and drowsy, and falls off from delighting in God and communion with Him. Will such things as those you follow be able to countervail your damage? Can they speak you peace, and uphold you in a day of darkness and distress? Or may it not be such now, as will make them all a burden and vexation to you? But, on the other hand, the more you abate and let go of these, and come empty and hungry to God in prayer, the more room shall you have for His consolations; and therefore, the more plentifully will He pour in of them, and enrich your soul with them the more, the less you take in of the other.

Again, would you have yourselves raised to, and continued and advanced in, a spiritual heavenly temper, free from the surfeits of earth, and awake and active for heaven? Be incessant in prayer.

But thou wilt say, I find nothing but heavy indisposedness in it,

nothing but roving and vanity of heart, and so, though I have used it some time, it is still unprofitable and uncomfortable to me.— Although it be so, yet, hold on, give it not over. Or need I say this to thee? Though it were referred to thyself, wouldst thou forsake it and leave off? Then what wouldst thou do next? For if there be no comfort in it, far less is there any for thee in any other way. If temptation should so far prevail with thee as to lead thee to try intermission, either thou wouldst be forced to return to it presently, or certainly wouldst fall into a more grievous condition, and, after horrors and lashings, must at length come back to it again, or perish forever. Therefore, however it go, continue praying. Strive to believe that love thou canst not see; for where sight is abridged, there it is proper for faith to work. If thou canst do no more, lie before thy Lord, and look to Him, and say, Lord, here I am, Thou mayest quicken and revive me if Thou wilt, and I trust Thou wilt; but if I must do it, I will die at Thy feet. My life is in Thy hand, and Thou art goodness and mercy; while I have breath I will cry, or, if I cannot cry, yet I will wait on, and look to Thee.

One thing forget not, that the ready way to rise out of this sad, yet safe state, is, to be much in viewing the Mediator, and interposing Him betwixt the Father's view and thy soul. Some who do Orthodoxly believe this to be right, yet, (as often befalls us in other things of this kind,) do not so consider and use it in their necessity, as becomes them, and therefore fall short of comfort. He hath declared it, *No man cometh unto the Father but by me*. How vile soever thou art, put thyself under His robe, and into His hand, and He will lead thee unto the Father, and present thee acceptable and blameless; and the Father shall receive thee, and declare Himself well pleased with thee in His well-beloved Son, who hath covered thee with His righteousness, and brought thee so clothed, and set thee before Him.

The End of all things is at Hand.

In respect of succeeding eternity, the whole duration of the world is not considerable; and to the Eternal Lord who made it, and hath appointed its period, *a thousand years are but as one day*. We think a thousand years a great matter, in respect of our short life, and more so through our short-sightedness, who look not through this to eternal life; but what is the utmost length of time, were it millions of years, to a thought of eternity? We find much room in this earth, but to the vast heavens, it is but as a point. Thus, that which is but small to us, a field or little inclosure, a fly, had it skill, would divide into provinces in proportion to itself. To each man, the *end of all things* is even after our measure, *at hand*; for when he dies, the world ends for him. Now this con-



sideration fits the subject, and presses it strongly. Seeing all things shall be quickly at an end, even the frame of heaven and earth, why should we, knowing this, and having higher hopes, lay out so much of our desires and endeavors upon those things, that are posting to ruin? It is no hard notion, to be sober and watchful to prayer, to be trading that way, and seeking higher things, and to be very moderate in these, which are of so short a date. As in themselves and their utmost term, they are of short duration, so more evidently to each of us in particular, who are so *soon cut off, and flee away*. Why should our hearts cleave to those things from which we shall so quickly part, and from which, if we will not freely part and let them go, we shall be pulled away, and pulled with the more pain, the closer we cleave, and the faster we are glued to them?

This the Apostle St. Paul casts in seasonably (though many think it not seasonable at such times,) when he is discoursing of a great point of our life, marriage, to work Christian minds to a holy freedom both ways, whether they use it or not; not to view it, nor anything here, with the world's spectacles, which make it look so big and so fixed, but to see it in the stream of time as passing by, and as no such great matter. 1 Cor. vii. 31. *The fashion of this world passeth away*, as a pageant or show in a street, going through and quickly out of sight. What became of all the marriage solemnities of kings and princes of former ages, which they were so taken up with in their time? When we read of them described in history, they are as a night dream, or a day-fancy, which passes through the mind and vanishes.

Oh! foolish man, that hunteth such poor things, and will not be called off till death benight him, and he finds his great work not done, yea, not begun, nor even seriously thought of. Your buildings, your trading, your lands, your matches, and friendships and projects, when they take with you, and your hearts are after them, say, But for how long are all these? *Their end is at hand; therefore be sober, and watch unto prayer*. Learn to divide better; more hours for prayer, and fewer for them; your whole heart for it, and none of it for them. Seeing they will fail you so quickly, prevent them; become free: lean not on them till they break, and you fall into the pit.

It is reported of one, that, hearing the fifth chapter of Genesis read, so long lives, and yet, the burden still, *they died*—Seth lived nine hundred and twelve years, *and he died*; Enos lived nine hundred and five years, *and he died*; Methuselah nine hundred and sixty-nine years, *and he died*;—he took so deeply the thought of death and eternity, that it changed his whole frame, and turned him from a voluptuous, to a most strict and pious course of life. How small a word will do much, when God sets it into the heart! But surely, this one thing would make the soul more calm and

sober in the pursuit of present things, if their term were truly computed and considered. How soon shall youth, and health, and carnal delights, be at an end ! How soon shall state-craft and king-craft, and all the great projects of the highest wits and spirits, be lain in the dust ! This casts a damp upon all those fine things. But to a soul acquainted with God, and in affection removed hence already, no thought so sweet as this. It helps much to carry it cheerfully through wrestlings and difficulties, through better and worse ; they see land near, and shall quickly be at home : that is the way. *The end of all things is at hand* ; an end of a few poor delights and the many vexations of this wretched life ; an end of temptations and sins, the worst of all evils ; yea, an end of the imperfect fashion of our best things here, an end of prayer itself, to which succeeds that new song of endless praises.

#### FAITH IN CHRIST.

Whom, having not seen, ye love ; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Faith elevates the soul not only above sense, and sensible things, but above reason itself. As reason corrects the errors which sense might occasion, so, supernatural faith corrects the errors of natural reason, judging according to sense.

The sun seems less than the wheel of a chariot, but reason teaches the philosopher, that it is much bigger than the whole earth, and the cause that it seems so little, is, its great distance. The naturally wise man is equally deceived by this carnal reason, in his estimate of Jesus Christ *the sun of Righteousness*, and the cause is the same, his great distance from him ; as the Psalmist speaks of the wicked, Psal. x. 5, *Thy judgments are far above out of his sight*. He accounts Christ and his glory a smaller matter than his own gain, honor, or pleasure ; for these are near him, and he sees their quantity to the full, and counts them bigger, yea far more worth than they are indeed. But the Apostle St. Paul, and all who are enlightened by the same spirit, they know by faith, which is divine reason, that the excellency of Jesus Christ far surpasses the worth of the whole earth, and all things earthly. Phil. iii. 7, 8.

To give a right assent to the Gospel of Christ is impossible, without divine and saving faith infused in the soul. To believe that the eternal Son of God clothed himself with human flesh, and dwelt amongst men in a tabernacle like theirs, and suffered death in the flesh ; that he who was Lord of life, hath freed us from the sentence of eternal death ; that he broke the bars and chains of death and rose again ; that he went into Heaven, and there at the Father's right hand sits in our flesh, and that glorified above the Angels ; this is the *great mystery of Godliness*. And a part of this mystery is, that *he is believed on in the world*. 1 Tim. ii. 16. This natural men may discourse of, and that very knowingly, and

give a kind of natural credit to it, as to a history that may be true ; but firmly to believe that there is a *divine truth* in all these things, and to have a persuasion of it stronger than of the very things we see with our eyes,—such an assent as this, is the peculiar work of the Spirit of God, and is certainly saving faith.

The soul that so believes, cannot choose but love. It is commonly true, that the eye is the ordinary door by which love enters into the soul, and it is true in respect of this love ; though it is denied of the eye of sense, yet (you see) it is ascribed to the eye of faith, *though you have not seen him, you love him, because you believe* : which is to see him spiritually. Faith, indeed, is distinguished from that vision which shall be in glory ; but it is the vision of the kingdom of grace, it is the eye of the new creature, that quick-sighted eye which pierces all the visible heavens, and sees above them ; which *looks to things that are not seen*, 2 Cor. iv. 18, *and is the evidence of things not seen*, Heb. xi. 1, *and sees Him who is invisible*, ver. 27. It is possible that a person may be much beloved upon the report of his worth and virtues, and upon a picture of him lively drawn, before sight of the party so commended, and represented ; but certainly when he is seen, and found answerable to the former, it raises the affection already begun, to a far greater height. We have the report of the perfections of Jesus Christ in the Gospel ; yea, so clear a description of him, that it gives a picture of him, and that, together with the sacraments, is the only lawful, and the only lively picture of our Saviour. Gal. iii. 1. Now faith believes this report, and beholds this picture, and so lets in the love of Christ to the soul. But further, it gives a particular experimental knowledge of Christ, and acquaintance with him ; it causes the soul to find all that is spoken of him in the word, and his beauty there represented, to be abundantly true : makes it really taste of his sweetness, and by that possesses the heart more strongly with his love, persuading it of the truth of those things, not by reasons and arguments, but by an inexpressible kind of evidence, which they only know who have it. Faith persuades a Christian of these two things which the philosopher gives as the causes of all love, *beauty* and *propriety*, the loveliness of Christ in himself, and our interest in him.

The former it effectuates not only by the first apprehending and believing of those his excellencies and beauty, but by frequent beholding of him, and eyeing him in whom all perfection dwells ; and it looks so oft on him, till it sets the very impression of his image (as it were) upon the soul, so that it can never be blotted out, and forgotten. The latter it doth by that particular *uniting* act which makes him our God and our Saviour.

#### The Nature of true Love to God.

There is in true love, a complacency and *delight* in God ; a conformity to his will ; a loving what he loves : it is studious of



his will, ever seeking to know more clearly what it is that is most pleasing to him, contracting a likeness to God in all his actions by conversing with him, by frequent contemplation of God, and looking on his beauty. As the eye lets in this affection, so it serves it constantly, and readily looks that way which love directs it. Thus the soul possessed with this love of Jesus Christ, the soul which hath its eye much upon him, often thinking on his former sufferings and present glory, the more it looks upon Christ the more it loves; and still the more it loves, the more it delights to look upon him.

#### The Union of Faith and Love.

There is an inseparable intermixture of love with belief and pious affection, in receiving Divine truth; so that in effect, as we distinguish them, they are mutually strengthened, the one by the other, and so, though it seem a circle, it is a divine one, and falls not under the censure of the school's pedantry. If you ask, How shall I do to *love*? I answer, *Believe*. If you ask, How shall I *believe*? I answer, *Love*. Although the expressions to a carnal mind are altogether unsavoury, by grossly mistaking them, yet to a soul taught to read and hear them, by any measure of the same spirit of love wherewith they were penned, they are full of heavenly and unutterable sweetness.

Many directions as to the means of begetting and increasing this love of Christ, may be here offered, and they who delight in number may multiply them; but surely this one will comprehend the greatest and best part, if not all of them; *Believe, and you shall love; believe much, and you shall love much*; labor for strong and deep persuasions of the glorious things which are spoken of in Christ, and this will command love. Certainly, did men, indeed believe his worth, they would accordingly love him; for the reasonable creature cannot but affect that most which it firmly believes to be worthiest of affection. O! this mischievous unbelief is that which makes the heart cold and dead towards God. Seek then to believe Christ's excellency in himself, and his love to us, and our interest in him, and this will kindle such a fire in the heart, as will make it ascend in a sacrifice of love to him.

The signs likewise of this love may be multiplied, according to the many fruits and workings of it; but in them all, itself is its own most infallible evidence. When the soul finds that all its obedience and endeavor to keep the commands of Jesus Christ, which himself makes its character, do flow from love, then it is true and sincere; for do or suffer what you will, without love all passes for nothing; all are ciphers without it, they signify nothing.

\* \* \* \* \*

You that have made choice of Christ for your love, let not your

hearts slip out, to renew your wonted base familiarity with sin ; for that will bring new bitterness to your souls, and at least for some time deprive you of the sensible favor of your beloved Jesus. Delight always in God, and give him your whole heart ; for he deserves it all, and is a satisfying good to it. The largest heart is all of it too strait for the riches of consolation which he brings with him. Seek to increase in this love : and though it is at first weak, yet labor to find it daily rise higher, and burn hotter and clearer, and consume the dross of earthly desires.

#### The Hope of the Believer.

Now hope is our *anchor fixed within the rail*, which stays us against all the storms that beat upon us in this troublesome sea that we are tossed upon. The soul which strongly believes and loves, may confidently hope to see what it believes, and to enjoy what it loves, and in that it may rejoice. It may say, whatsoever hazards, whether outward or inward, whatsoever afflictions, and temptations I endure, yet this one thing puts me out of hazard, and in that I will rejoice, that the salvation of my soul depends not upon my own strength, but is in my Saviour's hand : *My life is hid with Christ in God ; and when he who is my life shall appear, I likewise shall appear with him in glory.* The childish world are hunting shadows, and gaping and hoping after they know not what ; but the believer can say, *I know whom I have trusted, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.* Now we must have not only a right to these things, but withal there must be frequent consideration of them to produce joy. The soul must often view them, and so rejoice. *My meditation of him shall be sweet*, saith David. *I will be glad in the Lord.* Psal. civ. 31. The godly, failing in this, deprive themselves of much of that joy they might have ; and they who are most in these sublime thoughts have the highest and truest joy.

#### The Life of Religion a pleasant Life.

If these things were believed, we should hearken no more to the foolish prejudice which the world hath taken up against religion, and wherewith Satan endeavors to possess men's hearts, that they may be scared from the ways of holiness. they think it a sour, melancholy life, which hath nothing but sadness and mourning in it. But, to remove this prejudice,

Consider, 1. Religion debars not from the lawful delights which are taken in natural things, but teaches the moderate and regular use of them, which is far the sweeter ; for things lawful in themselves are in their excess sinful, and so prove bitterness in the

end. And if in some cases it requires the forsaking of lawful enjoyments, as of pleasure, or profits, or honor, for God and for his glory, it is generous and more truly delightful to deny them for this reason, than to enjoy them. Men have done much this way for the love of their country, and by a principle of moral virtue; but to lose any delight, or to suffer any hardship for that highest end—the glory of God, and by the strength of love to him, is far more excellent, and truly pleasant.

2. The delights and pleasures of sin, religion indeed banishes, but it is to change them for this joy that is unspeakably beyond them. It calls men from sordid and base delights to those that are pure delights indeed: it calls to men, Drink ye no longer of the puddle, here are the crystal streams of a living fountain. There is a delight in the very despising of impure delights; as St. Augustine exclaims, *Quam suave est istis suavitatibus carere!* *How pleasant is it to want these pleasures!* But for such a change, to have in their stead such delights, as that in comparison the other deserve not the name; to have such spiritual joy as shall end in eternal joy; it is a wonder we hasten not all to choose this joy, but it is indeed because we believe it not.

3. It is true, the godly are subject to great distresses and afflictions; but their joy is not extinguished by them, no, nor diminished neither, but often sensibly increased. When they have least of the world's joy, they abound most in spiritual consolations, and then relish them best. They find them sweetest, when their taste is not depraved by earthly enjoyments. *We rejoice in tribulation*, says St. Paul: and here our Apostle insists on that, to verify the substance of this joy in the midst of the greatest afflictions.

4. Spiritual grief, which seems most opposite to this spiritual joy, excludeth it not, for there is a secret delight and sweetness in the tears of repentance, a balm in them that refreshes the soul; and even their saddest kind of mourning, *viz.*, the dark times of desertion, hath this in it, which is someway sweet, that those mournings after their beloved, who absents himself, are a mark of their love to him, and a true evidence of it. And then all these spiritual sorrows, of what nature soever, are turned into spiritual joy; that is the proper end of them; they have a natural tendency that way.

#### Salvation.

Salvation expresses not only that which is negative, but implies likewise positive and perfect happiness; thus forgiveness of sins is put for the whole nature of Justification frequently in Scripture. It is more easy to say of this unspeakable happiness, what it is not, than what it is. There is in it a full and final freedom from



all annoyance ; all tears are wiped away, and their fountain is dried up ; all feeling and fear, or danger, of any the least evil, either of sin or punishment, is banished for ever ; there are no invasions of enemies, no robbing or destroying in all this holy mountain, no voice of complaining in the streets of the new Jerusalem. Here it is at the best but interchanges of mornings of joy, with sad evenings of weeping ; but there, there shall be no light, no need of sun nor moon, *For the glory of the Lord shall lighten it, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof*, Rev. xxi. 23.

Well may the Apostle (as he doth here throughout this Chapter) lay this salvation to counterbalance all sorrows and persecutions, and whatsoever hardships can be in the way to it. The soul that is persuaded of this, in the midst of storms and tempests enjoys a calm, triumphs in disgraces, grows richer by all its losses, and by death itself attains this immortal life.

Happy are they who have their eye fixed upon this salvation, and are longing and waiting for it ; who see so much of that brightness and glory, as darkens all the lustre of earthly things to them, and makes them trample upon those things which formerly they admired and doated on with the rest of the foolish world. Those things we account so much of, are but as rotten wood, or glow-worms that shine only in the night of our ignorance and vanity : so soon as the lightbeam of this salvation enters into the soul, it cannot much esteem or affect anything below it, and if those glances of it which shine in the word, and in the soul of a Christian, be so bright and powerful, what then shall the full sight and real possession of it be ?

#### The sufferings and glory of Christ the means of Salvation.

His suffering is the purchase of our salvation, and his glory is our assurance of it ; he as our head having triumphed, and being crowned, makes us likewise sure of victory and triumph. His having entered on the possession of glory, makes our hope certain. This is his prayer, *That where He is, there we may be also* ; and this is his own assertion, *The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them*, John xvii. 22, 24. This is his promise, *Because I live ye shall live also*, John xiv. 19. Christ and the believer are one ; this is that great mystery the Apostle speaks of, Ephes. v. 30. Though it is a common known truth, the words and outside of it obvious to all, yet none can understand it but they who indeed partake of it. By virtue of that union, their sins were accounted his, and Christ's sufferings are accounted theirs, and by consequence, his glory, the consequent of his sufferings, is likewise theirs. There is an indissoluble connexion betwixt the life of Christ, and of a believer. *Our life is hid with Christ in God* ; and therefore while we remain there, our life is there, though hid,

*and when he who is our life shall appear, we likewise shall appear with him in glory*, Coloss. iii. 3, 4. Seeing the sufferings and glory of our Redeemer are the main subject of the Gospel, and the causes of our salvation, and of our comfortable persuasion of it, it is a wonder that they are not more the matter of our thoughts. Ought we not daily to consider the bitterness of that cup of wrath he drank for us, and be wrought to repentance and hatred of sin to have sin imbittered to us by that consideration, and find the sweetness of his love in that he did drink it, and by that, he deeply possessed with love to him? These things we now and then speak of, but they sink not into our minds, as our Saviour exhorts where he is speaking of those same sufferings. O! that they were engraven on our hearts, and that sin were crucified in us, and *the world crucified to us, and we unto the world*, by the cross of Christ! Gal. vi. 14.

And let us be frequently considering the glory wherein he is, and have our eye often upon that, and our hearts solacing and refreshing themselves frequently with the thoughts of that place and condition wherein Christ is, and where our hopes are, ever long, to behold him: both to see his glory, and to be glorified with him, is it not reason? Yea, it is necessary, it cannot be otherwise, if our treasure, and Head be there, that our hearts be there likewise, Matt. vi. 21; Coloss. iii. 1, 2.

#### Reliance on the Grace of Christ.

Free Grace being rightly apprehended, is that which stays the heart in all estates, and keeps it from fainting, even in its saddest times. What though there is nothing in myself but matter of sorrow and discomfort, it cannot be otherwise; it is not from myself that I look for comfort at any time, but from my God and his free grace. Here is comfort enough for all times: when I am at the best, I ought not, I dare not, rely upon myself; when I am at the worst, I may, and should rely upon Christ, and his sufficient grace. Though I be the vilest sinner that ever came to him, yet I know that he is more gracious than I am sinful; yea, the more my sin is, the more glory will it be to his grace to pardon it; it will appear the richer. Doth not David argue thus, Psal. xxv. 11: *For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is very great*. But it is an empty fruitless notion of grace, to consider it only in the general, and in a wandering way: we are to look upon it particularly, as addressed to us; and it is not enough that it comes to us, in the message of him that brings it only to our ear, but that we may know what it is, it must come into us; then it is ours indeed. But if it come to us in the message only, and we send it away again, if it shall so depart, we had better never have heard of it; it will leave a guiltiness behind it, that shall make all our sin weigh much heavier than before.

Inquire whether you have entertained this grace or not ; whether it be come to you, and into you, or not ; whether the *kingdom of God is within you*, as our Saviour speaks, Luke xvii. 21. It is the most woful condition that can be, not to be far from the kingdom of God, and yet to fall short, and miss of it. The grace of God revealed in the Gospel is entreating you daily to receive it is willing to become yours, if you reject it not. Were your eyes open to behold the beauty and excellency of this grace, there would need no deliberation ; yea, you would endure none. Desire your eyes to be opened, and enlightened from above, that you may know it, and your hearts opened, that you may be happy by receiving it.

The Prophets inquired and searched diligently : Duty of searching the Scriptures.

Were the prophets not exempted from the pains of search and inquiry, who had the spirit of God not only in a high measure, but after a singular manner ? How unbecoming, then, are slothfulness and idleness in us ! Whether is it, that we judge ourselves advantaged with more of the Spirit than those holy men, or that we esteem the doctrine and mysteries of salvation, on which they bestowed so much of their labor, unworthy of ours ? These are both so gross, that we shall be loth to own either of them ; and yet, our laziness and negligence in searching after these things, seems to charge us with some such thought as one of those.

You will say, 'This concerns those who succeed to the work of the Prophets and Apostles in ordinary,—the ministers of the Gospel. And it doth indeed fall first upon them. It is their task indeed to be diligent, and, as the Apostle exhorts his Timothy, *to attend on reading*, 1 Tim. iv. 13 ; but, above all, to study to have much experimental knowledge of God and his Son Jesus Christ, and for this end, to disentangle and free themselves, as much as is possible, from lower things, in order to the search of heavenly mysteries. Prov. xviii. 1. As they are called *angels*, so ought they to be, as much as they can attain to it, in a constant nearness unto God, and attendance on him, like unto the angels, and to look much into these things as the angels here are said to do ; to endeavor to have their souls purified from the affections of sin, that the light of Divine truth may shine clear in them, and not be fogged, and misted with filthy vapors ; to have the impressions of God clearly written in their breasts, not mixed and blurred with earthly characters ; seasoning all their readings and common studies with much prayer, and divine meditation. They who converse most with the king, and are inward with him, know most of the affairs of state, and even the secrets of them, which



are hid from others : and certainly those of God's messengers who are oftenest with himself, cannot but understand their business best, and know most of his meaning, and the affairs of his kingdom ; and to that end it is confessed, that singular diligence is required in them. But seeing the Lord hath said without exception, that *His secret is with them that fear him*, Psalm xxv. 14, and that he will reveal Himself and his saving truths to those that humbly seek them ; do not any of you to yourselves so much injury, as to debar yourselves from sharing in your measure of the search of these things, which were the study of the prophets, and which by their study and publishing them, are made the more accessible and easy to us. Consider that they do concern us universally, if we would be saved ; for it is salvation here that they studied. *Search the Scriptures*, says our Saviour, John v. 39, and that is the motive, if there can be any that may be thought in reason pressing enough, or if we do indeed think so, *For in them ye think to have eternal life*. And it is there to be found : Christ is this *salvation* and this *eternal life*. And he adds further, *It is they* (these Scriptures) *that testify of me*. These are the golden mines in which alone the abiding treasures of eternity are to be found, and therefore worthy all the digging and pains we can bestow on them.

Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven ; which things the angels desire to look into.

The Prophets knew well that the things they prophesied were not to be fulfilled in their own times, and therefore in their prophesying concerning them, though both themselves and the people of God who were contemporary with them did reap the comfort of that doctrine, and were by faith partakers of the same salvation, and so it was to themselves as well as of us, yet in regard of the accomplishment, they knew it was not to themselves, it was not to be brought to pass in their days ; and therefore, speaking of the glory of Christ's kingdom, they often foretel it for *the latter days*, as their phrase is. And as we have the things they prophesied of, so we have this peculiar benefit of their prophecies, that their suiting so perfectly with the event and performance, serves much to confirm our Christian faith.

There is a foolish and miserable way of verifying this expression,—men ministering the doctrine of salvation to others and *not to themselves* ; carrying it in all their heads and tongues, and none of it in their hearts ; not hearing it even while they preach it ; extending the bread of life to others, and eating none of it themselves. And this the Apostle says, that he was most careful to avoid, and therefore dealt severely with his body, that it might

not in this way endanger his soul. *I beat down my body, says he, and keep it in subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away,* 1 Cor. ix. 27. It is not in this sense, that the prophets ministered to others, and not to themselves. No, they had joy and comfort in the very hopes of the Redeemer to come, and in the belief of the things which any others had spoken, and which themselves spake concerning him. And thus the true preachers of the Gospel, though their ministerial gifts are for the use of others, yet that salvation which they preach, they lay hold on and partake of themselves; as your boxes, wherein perfumes are kept for garments and other uses, are themselves perfumed by keeping them.

We see how the prophets ministered it as the never-failing consolation of the Church in those days, in all their distresses. It is wonderful when they are foretelling either the sorrows and afflictions, or the temporal restoration and deliverances of that people of the Jews, what sudden outleaps they will make, to speak of the kingdom of Jesus Christ and the days of the Gospel, insomuch that he who considers not the spirit they were moved by, would think it were incoherence and impertinency; but they knew well what they meant, that *those news* were never unseasonable, nor beside the purpose; that the sweetness of those thoughts, viz. the consideration of the Messiah, was able (to such as believed) to allay the bitterest distresses, and that the great deliverance He was to work, was the top and sum of all deliverances. Thus their prophecies of Him were present comfort to themselves and other believers then: and further, were to serve for a clear evidence of the Divine truth of those mysteries in the days of the Gospel, in and after their fulfilment.

This sweet stream of their doctrine did, as the rivers, make its own banks fertile and pleasant as it ran by, and flowed still forward to after ages, and by the confluence of more such prophecies grew greater as it went, till it fell in with the main current of the Gospel in the New Testament, both acted and preached by the Great Prophet himself whom they foretold as *to come*, and recorded by his Apostles and evangelists, and thus united into one river, clear as crystal. This doctrine of salvation in the Scriptures hath still refreshed the city of God, his church under the Gospel, and still shall do so, till it empty itself into the ocean of eternity.

The first discovery we have of this stream nearest its source, the eternal purpose of Divine mercy, is in that promise which the Lord himself preached in few words to our first parents, who had newly made themselves and their race miserable; *The seed of the woman shall break the head of the serpent,* Gen. iii. 15.

The agreement of the predictions of the Prophets with the things themselves, and the preaching of the Apostles following, (the other kind of men employed in this salvation,) make up one

organ, or great instrument, tuned by the same hand, and sounding by the same breath of the Spirit of God ; and that is expressed here, as the common authority of the doctrine in both, and the cause of their harmony and agreement in it.

Which things the Angels desire to look into.

All these extraordinary *gifts of the Holy Ghost*, the calling of *prophets and apostles and evangelists*, and the ordinary ministry of the Gospel by *pastors and teachers*, tend to that great design which God hath in *building his church*, in making up that great assembly of all the the elect, to enjoy and praise him for all eternity, Eph. iv. 11. For this end he sent his Son, out of his bosom, and for this end he sends forth his messengers to divulge that salvation which his Son hath wrought, and sends down his Spirit upon them, that they may be fitted for so high a service. Those cherubim wonder how guilty man escapes their flaming swords, and re-enters paradise. The angels see that their companions who fell are not restored, but behold their room filled up with the spirits of just men, and they envy it not: *Which mystery the angels desire to look into* ; and this is added in the close of these words for the extolling of it.

The angels look upon what they have seen already fulfilled with delight and admiration, and what remains, namely, the full accomplishment of this great work in the end of time, they look upon with desire to see it finished ; it is not a slight glance they take of it, but they fix their eyes and look steadfastly on it, *viz.*, that mystery of godliness, *God manifested in the flesh* ; and it is added, *seen of angels*, 1 Tim. iii. 16.

*The word made flesh*, draws the eyes of those glorious spirits, and possesses them with wonder to see the Almighty Godhead joined with the weakness of a man, yea, of an infant. He that stretcheth forth the heavens bound up in swaddling clothes ! and to surpass all the wonders of his life, this is beyond all admiration, that the Lord of life was subject to death, and that his love to rebellious mankind moved him both to take on and lay down that life.

It is no wonder the angels admire these things, and delight to look upon them ; but it is strange that we do not so. They view them steadfastly, and we neglect them : either we consider them not at all, or give them but a transient look, half an eye. That which was the great business of the Prophets and Apostles, both for their own times, and to convey them to us, we regard not ; and turn our eyes to foolish wandering thoughts which angels are ashamed at. They are not so concerned in this great mystery as we are ; they are but mere beholders, in comparison of us, yea, they seem rather to be losers some way, in that our nature, in it-



self inferior to theirs, is in Jesus Christ exalted above theirs, Heb. ii. 16. We bow down to the earth, and study, and grovel in it, rake into the very bowels of it, and content ourselves with the outside of *the unsearchable riches of Christ*, and look not within it; but they, having no will nor desire but for the glory of God, being pure flames of fire burning only in love to him, are no less delighted than amazed with the bottomless wonders of his wisdom and goodness shining in the work of our redemption.

It is our shame and folly, that we lose ourselves and our thoughts in poor childish things, and trifle away our days we know not how, and let these rich mysteries lie unregarded. They look up upon the Deity in itself with continual admiration; but then they look down to this mystery as another wonder. We give them an ear in public, and in a cold formal way stop conscience's mouth with some religious performances in private, and no more; but to have deep and frequent thoughts and to be ravished in the meditation of our Lord Jesus, once on the cross, and now in glory,—how few of us are acquainted with this!

We see here excellent company, and examples not only of the best of men that have been,—we have them for fellow-servants and fellow students,—but, if that can persuade us, we may all study the same lesson with the very angels, and have the same thoughts with them. This the soul doth, which often entertains itself with the delightful admiration of Jesus Christ and the redemption he hath wrought for us.

#### At the revelation of Jesus Christ.

It is termed *a day of revelation, a revelation of the just judgment of God*, Rom. ii. 5. And thus it would be to all, were it not that it is withal the *revelation of Jesus Christ*; therefore is it a day of grace, all light and blessedness to them who are in him, because they shall appear in him, and if he be glorious, they shall not be inglorious and ashamed. Indeed were our secret sins then to be set before our own eyes, in their most affrighted visage, and to be set open to the view of angels and men, and to the eye of Divine justice, and we left alone so revealed, who is there that could gather any comfort, and would not rather have their thoughts filled with horror at the remembrance and expectation of that day? And thus indeed all unbelieving and ungodly men may look upon it, and find it terrible; but to those who are shadowed under the robe of righteous Jesus, yea, who are made one with him, and shall partake of his glory in his appearing, it is the sweetest, the most comfortable thought that their souls can be entertained and possessed withal, to remember this glorious revelation of their Redeemer.

It is their great grief here, not that themselves are hated and

vilified, but that their Lord Jesus is so little known, and therefore so much despised in the world. He is veiled and hid from the world. Many nations acknowledge him not at all; and many of those that do in word confess, yet in deed deny him. Many that have a form of godliness, do not only want, but mock and scoff at the power of it; and to such Christ is not known, his excellencies are hid from their eyes. Now this glory of their Lord being precious to them that love him, they rejoice much in the consideration of this, that there is a day at hand, wherein he shall appear in his brightness and full of glory to all nations, and all shall be forced to acknowledge him; it shall be without doubt and unquestioned to all, that he is *the Messiah, the Redeemer, the Judge of the World.*

#### Difference between Faith and Hope.

The difference of these two graces, *faith* and *hope*, is so small, that the one is often taken for the other in Scripture; it is but a different aspect of the same confidence, *faith* apprehending the infallible truth of those Divine promises of which *hope* doth assuredly expect the accomplishment, and that is their truth; so that this immediately results from the other. This is the anchor fixed within the vail, which keeps the soul firm against all the tossings on these swelling seas, and the winds and tempests that arise upon them. The firmest thing in this inferior world is a believing soul.

Faith establishes the heart on Jesus Christ, and hope lifts it up, being on that rock, over the head of all intervenient dangers, crosses, and temptations, and sees the glory and happiness that follow after them.

#### Habitual Hope, and the way to attain it.

This exercise of hope, as I conceive, is not only to have the habit of it strong in the soul, but to act it often, to be often turning that way, to view that approaching day of liberty: *Lift up your heads, for the day of your redemption draweth nigh.* Luke xxi. 28. Where this hope is often acted, it will grow strong, as all habits do; and where it is strong, it will work much, and delight to act often, and will control both the doubtings and the other many impertinent thoughts of the mind, and force them to yield the place to it. Certainly they who long much for that coming of Christ, will often look up to it. We are usually hoping after other things, which do but offer themselves to draw us after them, and to scorn us. What are the breasts of most of us, but so many nests of foolish hopes and fears intermixed, which entertain us day and night, and steal away our precious hours from us, that might be laid out so gainfully upon the wise and sweet thoughts

of eternity, and upon the blessed and assured hope of the coming of our beloved Saviour !

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If you would have much of this, call off your affections from other things, that they may be capable of much of it. The same eye cannot both look up to heaven and down to earth at the same time. The more your affections are trussed up, and disentangled from the world, the more expedite and active will they be in this hope : the more sober they are, the less will they fill themselves with the coarse delights of earth, the more room will there be in them, and the more they shall be filled with this hope. It is great folly in our spiritual warfare to charge ourselves superfluously. The fulness of one thing hinders the receiving and admittance of any other, especially of things so opposite as these fulnesses are. *Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be ye filled with the Holy Ghost*, saith the Apostle, Ephes. v. 18. That is a brutish fulness, which makes a man no man ; this Divine fulness makes him more than a man ; it were happy to be so filled with this, as that it might be called a kind of drunkenness, as it was with the Apostles, Acts ii.

Gird up the loins of your Minds, be sober, and hope to the end.

As the Apostle says, *Gird up the loins of your mind*, so it is to be understood, let your *minds* be sober, all your affections inwardly attuned to your spiritual condition, not glutting yourselves with fleshly and perishing delights of any kind : for the more you take in of these, the less you shall have of spiritual comfort and of this perfect hope. They that pour out themselves upon present delights, look not like strangers here, and hopeful expectants of another life and better pleasures.

And certainly, the Captain of our salvation will not own them for his followers, who lie down to drink of these waters, but only such as in passing take of them with their hand. As excessive eating or drinking both makes the body sickly and lazy, fit for nothing but sleep, and besots the mind, as it cloyes up with filthy crudities the way through which the spirit should pass, bemiring them, and making them move heavily, as a coach in a deep way ; thus doth all immoderate use of the world, and its delights, wrong the soul in its spiritual condition, makes it sickly and feeble, full of spiritual distempers and inactivity, benumbs the graces of the Spirit, and fills the soul with sleepy vapours, makes it grow secure and heavy in spiritual exercises, and obstructs the way and motion of the Spirit of God, in the soul. Therefore, if you would be spiritual, healthful, and vigorous, and enjoy much of the consolations of Heaven, be sparing and sober in those of the earth, and what you abate of the one, shall be certainly made up in the other.



Health, with a good constitution of body, is more a constant, permanent pleasure, than that of excess and a momentary pleasing of the palate : thus, the comfort of this hope is a more refined and more abiding contentment, than any that is to be found in the passing enjoyments of this world ; and it is a foolish bargain to exchange a drachm of one for many pounds of the other. Consider how pressingly the Apostle St. Paul reasons, 1 Cor. ix. 25, *And every man that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things.* And take withal our Saviour's exhortation : *Be sober and watch, for ye know not at what hour your Lord will come.* Matt. xxv. 13.

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The custom of those countries was, that wearing long garments, they trussed them up for work or a journey. Chastity is indeed a Christian grace, and a great part of the soul's freedom and spiritualness, and fits it much for Divine things, yet I think it is not so particularly and entirely intended in this expression, as St. Jerome and others take it ; for though the girding of the loins seemed to them to favor that sense, it is only an allusion to the manner of girding up which was then used ; and besides, the Apostle here makes it clear that he meant somewhat else ; for he says, *The loins of your minds.* Gather up your affections that they hang not down to hinder you in your race, and so, in your hopes of obtaining ; and do not only gather them up, but tie them up, that they fall not down again, or if they do, be sure to gird them straiter than before. Thus be still as men prepared for a journey, tending to another place. This is not our home, nor the place of our rest : therefore our loins must be still girt up, our affections kept from training and dragging down upon the earth.

Men who are altogether earthly and profane, are so far from girding up the loins of their mind, that they set them wholly downwards. The very highest part of their soul is glued to the earth, and they are daily partakers of the serpent's curse, they go on their belly and eat the dust : *they mind earthly things.* Phil. iii. 19. Now this disposition is inconsistent with grace ; but they that are in some measure truly godly, though they grovel not so, yet may be somewhat guilty of suffering their affections to fall too low, that is, to be too much conversant with vanity, and further engaged than is meet, to some things that are worldly ; and by this means they may abate of their heavenly hopes, and render them less perfect, less clear and sensible to their souls.

And because they are most subject to take this liberty in the fair and calm weather of prosperity, God doth often wisely and mercifully cause rough blasts of affliction to arise upon them, to make them gather their loose garments nearer to them, and gird them closer.

Let us then remember our way, and where we are, and keep

our garments girt up, for we walk amidst thorns and briers which, if we let them down, will entangle and stop us, and possibly tear our garments. We walk through a world where there is much mire of sinful pollutions, and therefore it cannot but defile them; and the crowd we are among will be ready to tread on them, yea, our own feet may be entangled in them, and so make us stumble, and possibly fall. Our only safest way is to gird up our affections wholly.

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This is the place of our trial and conflict, but the place of our rest is above. We must here have *our loins girt*, but when we come there, we may wear our long white robes at their full length without disturbance, for there is nothing there but peace, and without danger of defilement, for *no unclean thing is there*, yea the streets of that new Jerusalem are paved with gold. To Him then, who hath prepared that city for us, let us ever give praise.

As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance; but as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.

There is no doctrine in the world either so pleasant or so pure as that of Christianity: it is matchless, both in sweetness and holiness. The faith and hope of a Christian have in them an abiding precious balm of comfort; but this is never to be so lavished away, as to be poured into the puddle of an impure conscience: no, that were to lose it unworthily. *As many as have this hope purify themselves, even as he is pure.* 1 John iii. 3. Here they are commanded to *be holy as He is holy*. Faith first purifies the heart, (Acts xv. 9,) empties it of the love of sin, and then fills it with the consolation of Christ and the hope of glory.

It is a foolish misgrounded fear, and such as argues inexperience of the nature and workings of Divine grace, to imagine that the assured hope of salvation will beget unholiness and presumptuous boldness in sin, and that therefore the doctrine of that assurance is a doctrine of licentiousness. Our Apostle, we see, is not so sharp-sighted as these men think themselves; he apprehends no such matter, but indeed supposes the contrary as unquestionable; he takes not assured hope and holiness as enemies, but joins them as nearest friends: *hope perfectly and be holy*.

They are mutually strengthened and increased each by the other. The more assurance of salvation, the more holiness, the more delight in it, and study of it, as the only way to that end. And as labor is most pleasant when we are made surest it shall not be lost, nothing doth make the soul so nimble and active in obedience as this *oil of gladness*, this assured hope of glory. Again, the more holiness there is in the soul, the clearer always is this assurance; as we see the face of the heavens best, when

there are fewest clouds. The greatest affliction doth not damp this hope so much as the smallest sin ; yea, it may be the more lively and sensible to the soul by affliction ; but by sin it always suffers loss, as the experience of all Christians does certainly teach them. .

The unconverted heart subject to *the lusts of ignorance.*

The soul of man unconverted, is no other than a den of impure lusts, wherein dwell pride, uncleanness, avarice, malice, &c., just as Babylon is described, Rev. xviii. 2, or as Isai. xiii. 21. Were a man's eyes opened, he would as much abhor to remain with himself in that condition as to dwell in a house full of snakes and serpents, as St. Austin says. And the first part of conversion is at once to rid the soul of these noisome inhabitants ; for there is no one at all found naturally vacant and free from them. Thus the Apostle here expresses of the believers to whom he wrote, that these lusts were theirs before, *in their ignorance.*

There is a truth implied in it, *viz.*, that all sin arises from some kind of ignorance, or, at least, from present inadvertence and inconsideration, turning away the mind from the light ; which therefore, for the time, is as if it were not, and is all one with ignorance in the effect, and therefore the works of sin are all called *works of darkness* ; for were the true visage of sin seen by a full light, undressed and unpainted, it were impossible, while it so appeared, that any one soul could be in love with it ; it would rather fly it, as hideous and abominable. But because the soul unrenewed is all darkness, therefore it is all lust and love of sin ; there is no order in it, because no light. As at the first in the world, confusion and darkness went together, and *darkness was upon the face of the deep*, it is so in the soul ; the more ignorance, the more abundance of lusts.

That light which frees the soul, and rescues it from the very kingdom of darkness, must be somewhat beyond that which nature can attain to. All the light of philosophy, natural and moral, is not sufficient, yea, the very knowledge of the law, severed from Christ, serves not so to enlighten and renew the soul, as to free it from the darkness or ignorance here spoken of : for our Apostle writes to Jews who knew the law, and were instructed in it before their conversion, yet he calls those times, wherein Christ was unknown to them, *the times of their ignorance.* Though the stars shine never so bright and the moon with them in its full, yet they do not altogether make it day ; still it is night till the sun appear. Therefore the Hebrew doctors, upon that word of Solomon's *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*, say, *Vana etiam lex, donec venerit Messias* : Vain even the law, until Messiah come. Therefore of him Zacharias says, *The day-spring from on high hath visited us,*



*to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace, Luke i. 78, 79.*

A natural man may attain to very much acquired knowledge of the doctrine of Christ, and may discourse excellently of it, and yet still his soul be in the *chains of darkness*, fast locked up under the ignorance here mentioned, and so he may be still of a *carnal mind*, in subjection to these lusts of ignorance.

The saving light of faith, is a beam of the *Sun of Righteousness*, himself, that he sends into the soul, by which he makes it discern his incomparable beauties, and by that sight alienates it from all those lusts and desires, which do then appear to be what indeed they are, vileness and filthiness itself, making the soul wonder at itself, how it could love such base trash so long, and fully resolve now on the choice of Jesus Christ, *the chief among ten thousands*, Cant. v. 10, yea, *the fairest of the children of men*, Psal. xlv. 2, for that he is withal the only begotten Son of God, *the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person*, Heb. i. 3.

The soul once acquainted with him, can, with disdain, turn off all the base solicitations and importunities of sin, and command them away that formerly had command over it, though they plead former familiarities and the interest they once had in the heart of the Christian before it was enlightened and renewed. He can well tell them, after his sight of Christ, that it is true, while he knew no better pleasures than they were, he thought them lovely and pleasing, but that one glance of the face of Jesus Christ hath turned them all into extreme blackness and deformity; that so soon as ever Christ appeared to him, they straightway lost all their credit and esteem in his heart, and have lost it forever; they need never look to recover it any more.

Be ye holy, for I am holy.

Of all children, the children of God are the most obliged to obedience, for he is both the wisest and the most loving of Fathers. And the sum of all his commands is that which is their glory and happiness, that they endeavor to be like him, to resemble their heavenly Father. *Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*, says our Saviour, Matt. v. 48. And here the Apostle is citing out of the Law: *Be ye holy for I am holy*, Levit. xi. 44. Law and Gospel agree in this. Again: children who resemble their fathers, as they grow up in years, they grow the more like to them, thus the children of God do increase in their resemblance, and are daily more and more renewed after his image. There is in them an innate likeness by reason of his image impressed on them in their first renovation, and his Spirit dwelling within them; and there is a continual increase of it arising from

their pious imitation and study of conformity, which is here exhorted to.

The imitation of vicious men and the corrupt world is here forbidden. The imitation of men's indifferent customs is base and servile; the imitation of the virtues of good men is commendable; but the imitation of this highest pattern, this primitive goodness, the most holy God, is the top of excellency. It is well said, *Summa religionis est imitari quem colis*: The essence of religion consists in the imitation of Him we worship. All of us offer Him some kind of worship, but few seriously study and endeavor this blessed conformity.

There is unquestionably among those who profess themselves the people of God, a select number who are indeed his children, and bear his image both in their hearts and in their lives; this impression of holiness is on their souls and their conversation; but with the most, a name and a form of godliness are all they have for religion. Alas! we speak of holiness, and we hear of it, and it may be we commend it, but we act it not; or, if we do, it is but an acting of it, in the sense in which the word is often taken for a personated acting, as on a stage in the sight of men; not as in the sight of our lovely God, lodging it in our hearts, and from thence diffusing it into all our actions. A child is truly like his father, when not only his visage resembles him, but still more so his mind and inward disposition; thus are the true children of God like their heavenly Father in their words and in their actions, but most of all in heart.

It is no matter though the profane world (which so hates God that it cannot endure his image) do mock and revile; it is thy honor to be, as David said, (2 Sam. vi. 22) thus *more vile*, in growing still more like unto Him in holiness. What though the polite man count thy fashion a little odd and too precise, it is because he knows nothing above that model of goodness which he hath set himself, and therefore approves of nothing beyond it; he knows not God, and therefore does not discern and esteem what is most like him. When courtiers come down into the country, the common homebred people possibly think their habit strange, but they care not for that, it is the fashion at court. What need, then, that the godly should be so tender-foreheaded, as to be put out of countenance because the world looks on holiness as a singularity? it is the only fashion in the highest court, yea, of the King of kings himself.

As it will raise our endeavor high, to look on the highest pattern, so it will lay our thoughts low concerning ourselves. Men compare themselves with men, and readily with the worst, and flatter themselves with that comparative betterness. This is not the way to see our spots, to look into the muddy streams of profane men's lives; but look into the clear fountain of the word,

and there we may both discern and wash them. Consider the infinite holiness of God, and this will humble us to the dust. When Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord, and heard the Seraphim cry, *Holy, holy, holy*, he cried out of his own and the people's unholiness, *Woe is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.* Chap vi. 3, 4.

#### THE HOLY FEAR OF GOD.

Pass the time of your sojourning here in Fear.

It were superfluous to insist on the defining of this passion of fear, and the manifold distinctions of it, either with philosophers or divines. The fear here recommended, is, out of question, a holy self-suspicion and fear of offending God, which may not only consist with assured hope of salvation, and with faith, and love, and spiritual joy, but is their inseparable companion; as all divine graces are linked together, (as the heathens said of their three graces,) and, as they dwell together, they grow or decrease together. The more a Christian believes, and loves, and rejoices in the love of God, the more unwilling surely he is to displease him, and if in danger of displeasing him, the more afraid of it; and on the other side, this fear being the true principle of a wary and holy conversation, fleeing sin, and the occasions of sin, and temptations to it, and resisting them when they make an assault, is as a watch or guard that keeps out the enemies and disturbers of the soul, and so preserves its inward peace, keeps the assurance of faith and hope unmolested, and that joy which they cause, and the intercourse and societies of love betwixt the soul and her beloved, uninterrupted; all which are most in danger when this fear abates and falls to slumbering; for then, some notable sin or other is ready to break in and put all into disorder, and for a time make those graces, and the comfort of them to present feeling, as much to seek as if they were not there at all.

No wonder, then, that the Apostle, having stirred up his Christian brethren, whatsoever be their estate in the world, to seek to be rich in those jewels of faith, and hope, and love, and spiritual joy, and then, considering that they travel amongst a world of thieves and robbers,—no wonder, I say, that he adds this, advises them to give those their jewels in custody, under God, to this trusty and watchful grace of godly fear; and having earnestly exhorted them to holiness, he is very fitly particular in this fear, which makes up so great a part of that holiness, that it is often in Scripture named for it all.

Solomon calls it the *beginning* or the *top of wisdom*, Prov. xv. 33: the word signifies both, and it is both. The beginning of it, is the beginning of wisdom, and the progress and increase of it,



is the increase of wisdom. That hardy rashness which many account valor, is the companion of ignorance; and of all rashness, boldness to sin is the most witless and foolish. There is in this, as in all fear, an apprehension of an evil whereof we are in danger. The evil is sin, and the displeasure of God and punishment following upon sin. The godly man judgeth wisely, as the truth is, that sin is the greatest of evils, and the cause of all other evils; it is a transgression of the just law of God, and so a provocation of His just anger, and the cause of those punishments, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, which he inflicts. And then, considering how mighty He is to punish, considering both the power and the reach of his hand, that it is both most heavy and unavoidable; all these things may and should concur to the working of this fear.

There is, no doubt, a great difference betwixt those two kinds of fear that are usually differenced by the names of *servile* and *filial* fear; but certainly, the most genuine fear of the sons of God, who call him Father, doth not exclude the consideration of his justice and of the punishment of sin which his justice inflicts. We see here, it is used as the great motive of this fear, that He *judgeth every man according to his works*. And David in that Psalm wherein he so much breathes forth those other sweet affections of love, and hope, and delight in God and in his word, yet expresseth this fear even of the justice of God: *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments*. Psal. cxix. 120. The flesh is to be awed by Divine judgments, though the higher and surer part of the soul is strongly and freely tied with the cords of love. Temporal corrections, indeed, they fear not so much in themselves, as that impression of wrath that may be upon them for their sins. Psal. vi. 1. That is the main matter of their fear, because their happiness is in His love, and the light of His countenance, that is their life. They regard not how the world looks upon them; they care not who frown, so He smile on them; because no other enemy nor evil in the world can deprive them of this, but their own sin, therefore that is what they fear most.

As the evil is great, so the Christian hath great reason to fear in regard of his danger of it, considering the multitude, strength, and craft of his enemies, and his own weakness and unskillfulness to resist them. And his sad experience in being often foiled, teacheth him that it is thus; he cannot be ignorant of it; he finds how often his own resolutions and purposes deceive him. Certainly, a godly man is sometimes driven to wonder at his own frailty and inconstancy. What strange differences will be betwixt him and himself: how high and how delightful at some times are his thoughts of God and the glory of the life to come; and yet, how easily at another time base temptations will bemire him, or, at the least molest and vex him! And this keeps him in a continual fear, and that fear in continual vigilancy and circumspectness.

When he looks up to God, and considers the truth of his promises, and the sufficiency of his grace and protection, and the almighty strength of his Redeemer, these things fill his soul with confidence and assurance; but when he turns his eye downward again upon himself, and finds so much remaining corruption within, and so many temptations, and dangers, and adversaries without, this forces him not only to fear, but to despair of himself; and it should do so, that his trust in God may be the purer and more entire. That confidence in God will not make him secure and presumptuous in himself, nor that fear of himself make him diffident of God. This fear is not opposite to faith, but high-mindedness and presumption are. See Rom. xi. 20. To a natural man, it would seem an odd kind of reasoning that of the apostle, Phil. ii. 12, 13: *It is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure*: therefore, (would he think) you may save labor, you may sit still, and not work, or, if you work, you may work fearlessly, being so sure of His help: but the apostle is of another mind; his inference is, *Therefore, work out your own salvation, and work it with fear and trembling.*

But he that hath assurance of salvation, why should he fear? If there is truth in his assurance, nothing can disappoint him, not sin itself. It is true; but it is no less true, that if ye do not fear to sin, there is no truth in his assurance: it is not the assurance of faith, but the mispersuasion of a secure and profane mind. Suppose it so, that the sins of a godly man cannot be such as to cut him short of that salvation whereof he is assured; yet they may be such as for a time will deprive him of that assurance, and not only remove the comfort he hath in that, but let in horrors and anguish of conscience in its stead. Though a believer is freed from hell, (and we may overstrain this assurance, in our doctrine, beyond what the soberest and devoutest men in the world can ever find in themselves, though they will not trouble themselves to contest and dispute with them that say they have it,) so that his soul cannot come there: yet some sins may bring as it were a hell into his soul for a time, and this is reason enough for any Christian in his right wits to be afraid of sin. No man would willingly hazard himself upon a fall that may break his leg, or some other bone; though he could be made sure that he should not break his neck, or that his life were not at all in danger, and that he should be perfectly cured, yet, the pain and trouble of such a hurt would terrify him, and make him wary and fearful when he walks in danger. The broken bones that David complains of after his fall, may work fear and wariness in those that hear him, though they were ascertained of a like recovery.

This fear is not cowardice; it doth not debase, but elevates the mind; for it drowns all lower fears, and begets true fortitude and courage to encounter all dangers, for the sake of a good con-

science and the obeying of God. *The righteous is bold as a lion.* Prov. xxviii. 1. He dares do anything but offend God ; and to dare to do that, is the greatest folly, and weakness, and baseness, in the world. From this fear have sprung all the generous resolutions, and patient sufferings of the saints and martyrs of God ; because they durst not sin against Him, therefore they durst be imprisoned, and impoverished, and tortured, and die for Him. Thus the prophet sets carnal and godly fear as opposite, and the one expelling the other. Isa. viii. 12, 13. And our Saviour, Luke xii. 4, *Fear not them that kill the body ; but fear Him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell ; yea, I say unto you, fear Him.* Fear not, but fear ; and therefore fear, that you may not fear. This fear is like the trembling that hath been observed in some of great courage before battles. Moses was bold and fearless in dealing with a proud and wicked king, but when God appeared, he said, (as the apostle informs us,) *I exceedingly fear and quake.* Heb. xii. 21.

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You are *sojourners* and *strangers*, (as here the word signifies,) and a wary, circumspect carriage becomes strangers, because they are most exposed to wrongs and hard accidents. You are encompassed with enemies and snares ; how can you be secure in the midst of them ? This is not your rest ; watchful fear becomes this your sojourning. Perfect peace and security are reserved for you at home, and that is the last term of this fear ; it continues all the time of this sojourning life, dies not before us ; we and it shall expire together. This, then, is the term or continuance of this fear.

*Blessed is he that feareth always,* says Solomon, Proverbs xxviii. 14 ; in secret and in society, in his own house and in God's. We must hear the word with fear, and preach it with fear, afraid to miscarry in our intentions and manners. *Serve the Lord, with fear,* yea, in times of inward comfort and joy, yet *rejoice with trembling.* Psal. ii. 11. Not only when a man feels most his own weakness, but when he finds himself strongest. None are so high advanced in grace here below, as to be out of need of this grace ; but when their sojourning shall be done, and they are come home to their father's house above, then no more fearing. No entrance for dangers there, and therefore no fear. A holy reverence of the majesty of God they shall indeed have then most of all, as the angels still have, because they shall see Him most clearly, and because the more he is known, the more he is revered ; but this fear that relates to danger, shall then vanish, for in that world there is neither sin, nor sorrow for sin, nor temptation to sin ; no more conflicts, but after a full and final victory, an eternal peace, an everlasting triumph. Not only fear, but faith, and hope, do imply some imperfection not consistent with that blessed estate ;

and therefore all of them, having obtained their end, shall end; *faith in sight, hope in possession, and fear in perfect safety*; and everlasting love and delight shall fill the whole soul in the vision of God.

The Course of a Man's Life out of Christ.

The whole course of a man's life out of Christ, is nothing but a continual trading in vanity, running a circle of toil and labor, and reaping no profit at all. This is the vanity of every natural man's conversation, that not only others are not benefited by it, but it is fruitless to himself; there arises to him no solid good out of it. That is most truly vain, which attains not its proper end; now, all a man's endeavors aim at his satisfaction and contentment, that conversation which gives him nothing of that, but removes him further from it, is justly called *vain conversation*. *What fruit had ye*, says the Apostle, *in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?* Rom. vi. 21. Either count that shame which at the best grows out of them, their fruit, or confess they have none; therefore they are called *the unfruitful works of darkness*. Ephes. v. 11.

Let the voluptuous person say it out upon his death-bed, what pleasure or profit doth then abide with him of all his former sinful delights. Let him tell if there remain anything of them all, but that which he would gladly not have to remain, the sting of an accusing conscience, which is as lasting as the delight of sin was short and vanishing. Let the covetous and ambitious declare freely, even those of them who have prospered most in their pursuit of riches and honor, what ease all their possessions or titles do then help them to: whether their pains are the less because their chests are full, or their houses stately, or a multitude of friends and servants waiting on them with hat and knee. And if all these things cannot ease their body, how much less can they quiet the mind! And therefore is it not true, that all pains in these things, and the uneven ways into which they sometimes step aside to serve those ends, and generally, that all the ways of sin wherein they have wearied themselves, were vain rolling and tossings up and down, not tending to a certain haven of peace and happiness! It is a lamentable thing to be deluded a whole life-time with a false dream. See Isaiah ii. 8.

You that are going on in the common road of sin, although many, and possibly your own parents, have trodden it before you, and the greatest part of those you now know are in it with you, and keep you company in it, yet, be persuaded to stop a little, and ask yourselves what is it you seek, or expect in the end of it. Would it not grieve any laboring man, to work hard all the day, and have no wages to look for at night! It is a greater loss to wear



out our whole life, and in the evening of our days find nothing but anguish and vexation. Let us then think this, that so much of our life as is spent in the ways of sin, is all lost, fruitless, and *vain conversation*.

And in so far as the Apostle says here, *You are redeemed from this conversation*, this imports it to be a servile slavish condition, as the other word, *vain*, expresses it to be fruitless. And this is the madness of a sinner, that he fancies liberty in that which is the basest thralldom; as those poor frantic persons that are lying ragged, and bound in chains, yet imagine that they are kings, that their irons are chains of gold, their rags robes, and their filthy lodge a palace. As it is misery to be liable to the sentence of death, so it is slavery to be subject to the dominion of sin; and he that is delivered from the one, is likewise set free from the other. There is one redemption from both. He that is redeemed from destruction by the blood of Christ, is likewise redeemed from that vain and unholy conversation that leads to it. So, Tit. ii. 14. Our Redeemer was anointed for this purpose, not to free the captives from the sentence of death, and yet leave them still in prison, but to *proclaim liberty to them, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound*. Isa. lxi. 1.

You easily persuade yourselves that Christ hath died for you, and redeemed you from hell; but you consider not, that if it be so, he hath likewise redeemed you from your vain conversation, and hath set you free from the service of sin. Certainly, while you find not that, you can have no assurance of the other; if the chains of sin continue still upon you, for anything you can know, these chains do bind you over to the other *chains of darkness* the Apostle speaks of, 2 Pet. ii. 4. Let us not delude ourselves; if we find the love of sin and of the world work stronger in our hearts than the love of Christ, we are not as yet partakers of his redemption.

The precious Blood of Christ effectual to redemption only by a practical knowledge and experience of its power.

It is that must make all this effectual, the right knowledge and due consideration of it. Ye do know it already, but I would have you know it better, more deeply and practically: turn it often over, be more in the study and meditation of it. There is work enough in it still for the most discerning mind; it is a mystery so deep, that you shall never reach the bottom of it, and withal so useful, that you shall find always new profit by it. Our folly is, we gape after new things, and yet are in effect ignorant of the things we think we know best. That learned Apostle who knew so much, and spoke so many tongues, yet says, *I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified*. 1 Cor. ii. 2.

rather to cover their remaining malices with superficial verbal for- And again he expresses this as the top of his ambition, *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.* Phil. iii. 10. That conformity is this only knowledge. He that hath his lusts unmortified, and a heart unweaned from the world, though he know all the history of the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and can discourse well of them, yet indeed he knows them not.

If you would increase much in holiness, and be strong against the temptations to sin, this is the only art of it; view much, and so seek to know much of the death of Jesus Christ. Consider often at how high a rate we were redeemed from sin, and provide this answer, for all the enticements of sin and the world:—"Except you can offer my soul something beyond that price that was given for it on the cross, I cannot hearken to you."—"Far be it from me," will a Christian say, who considers this redemption, "that ever I should prefer a base lust, or anything in this world, or it all, to Him who gave himself to death for me, and paid my ransom with his blood. His matchless love hath freed me from the miserable captivity of sin, and hath forever fastened me to the sweet yoke of his obedience. Let him alone to dwell and rule within me, and never let him go forth from my heart, who for my sake refused to come down from the cross."

#### The time of Messiah's coming.

It is doubtless the fit time; but notwithstanding the schoolmen offer at reasons to prove the fitness of it, as their humor is to prove all things, none dare, I think, conclude, but if God had so appointed, it might have been either sooner or later. And our safest way is to rest in this, that it was the fit time, because so it pleased Him, and to seek no other season why, having promised the Messiah so quickly, after man's fall, He deferred his coming about four thousand years, and a great part of that time shut up the knowledge of Himself and the true religion, within the narrow compass of that one nation of which Christ was to be born; of these and such like things, we can give no other reason than that which he teacheth us in a like case, *Even so, Father, because it seemeth good unto thee.* Matt. xi. 26.

Belief in God through Christ. Who by Him do believe in God, &c.

A man may have, while living out of Christ, yea, he must, he cannot choose but have a conviction within him, that there is a God; and further he may have, even out of Christ, some kind of belief of those things that are spoken concerning God; but to repose on God as his God and his salvation, which is indeed to be-

lieve in Him, this cannot be but where Christ is the *medium* through which we look upon God ; for so long as we look upon God through our own guiltiness, we can see nothing but His wrath, and apprehend Him as an armed enemy ; and therefore are so far from resting on Him as our happiness, that the more we view it, it puts us upon the more speed to fly from Him, and to cry out, *Who can dwell with everlasting burnings, and abide with a consuming fire?* But our Saviour, taking sin out of the way, puts himself betwixt our sins and God, and so makes a wonderful change of our apprehension of Him. When you look through a red glass, the whole heavens seem bloody ; but through pure uncolored glass, you receive the clear light that is so refreshing and comfortable to behold. When sin unpardonable is betwixt, and we look on God through that, we can perceive nothing but anger and enmity in his countenance ; but make Christ once the *medium*, our pure Redeemer, and through him, as clear, transparent glass, the beams of God's favorable countenance shine in upon the soul. The Father cannot look upon his well-beloved Son, but graciously and pleasingly. God looks on us out of Christ, sees us rebels, and fit to be condemned : we look on God as being just and powerful to punish us ; but when Christ is betwixt, God looks on us in him as justified, and we look on God in him as pacified, and see the smiles of His favorable countenance. Take Christ out, all is terrible ; interpose him, all is full of peace ; therefore set him always betwixt, and by him we shall believe in God.

Unfeigned love of the Brethren. See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.

Love must be *unfeigned*. It appears that this dissimulation is a disease that is very incident in this particular. The Apostle St. Paul hath the same word, Rom. xii. 9, and the Apostle St. John to the same sense, 1 John iii. 18. That it have that double reality which is opposed to doubled-dissembled love ; that it be cordial and effectual ; that the professing of it arise from truth of affection, and, as much as may be, be seconded with action ; that both the heart and the hand may be the seal of it rather than the tongue ; not court holy-water and empty noise of service and affection, that fears nothing more than to be put upon trial. Although thy brother with whom thou conversest, cannot, it may be, see through thy false appearances, He who commands this love looks chiefly within, seeks it there, and, if he find it not there, hates them most who most pretend it ; so that the art of dissembling, though never so well studied, cannot pass in the King's court, to whom all hearts are open, and all desires known. When, after variances, men are brought to an agreement, they are much subject to this,

givenness, than to dislodge them, and free the heart of them. This is a poor self deceit. As the philosopher said to him, who being ashamed that he was espied by him in a tavern in the outer room, withdrew himself to the inner, he called after him, "That is not the way out; the more you go that way, you will be the further within it:" so when hatreds are upon admonition not thrown out, but retire inward to hide themselves, they grow deeper and stronger than before; and those constrained semblances of reconciliation are but a false healing, do but skin the wound over, and therefore it usually breaks forth worse again.

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Love must be *pure* from a pure heart. This is not all one with the former, as some take it. It is true, doubleness or hypocrisy is an impurity, and a great one; but all impurity is not doubleness: one may really mean that friendship and affection he expresses, and yet it may be most contrary to that which is here required, because *impure*; such a *brotherly love* as that of Simeon and Levi, brethren in iniquity, as the expressing them *brethren*, Gen. xlix., is taken to mean. When hearts are cemented together by impurity itself, by ungodly conversation and society in sin, as uncleanness or drunkenness, &c., this is a swinish fraternity, a friendship which is contracted, as it were, by wallowing in the same mire. Call it good fellowship, or what you will, all the fruit that in the end can be expected out of unholy friendliness and fellowship in sinning together, is, to be tormented together, and to add each to the torment of another.

The mutual love of Christians must be pure, arising from such causes as are pure and spiritual, from the sense of our Saviour's command and of his example; for he himself joins that with it. *A new commandment give I you*, saith he, *that as I have loved you, so you also love one another*, John xiii. 34. They that are indeed lovers of God are united, by that their hearts meet in Him, as in one centre: they cannot but love one another. Where a godly man sees his Father's image, he is forced to love it; he loves those whom he perceives godly, so as to delight in them, because that image is in them; and those that appear destitute of it, he loves them so as to wish them partakers of that image. And this is all for God: he loves *amicum in Deo*, & *inimicum propter Deum*: that is, he loves a friend in God, and an enemy for God. And as the Christian's love is pure in its cause, so in its effects and exercise. His society and converse with any, tend mainly to this, that he may mutually help and be helped in the knowledge and love of God; he desires most that he and his brethren may jointly mind their journey heavenwards, and further one another in their way to the full enjoyment of God. And this is truly the love of a pure heart, which both begins and ends in God.

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There is in this fervent love, sympathy with the griefs of our brethren, desire and endeavor to help them, bearing their infirmities, and recovering them too, if it may be; raising them when they fall, admonishing and reproofing them as is needful, sometimes sharply and yet still in love; rejoicing in their good, in their gifts and graces, so far from envying them, that we be glad as if they were our own. There is the same blood running in their veins: you have the same Father and the same Spirit within you, and the same Jesus Christ, the head of that glorious fraternity, *The first-born among many brethren*, Rom. viii. 29; of whom the Apostle saith, that *He hath re-collected into one, all things in Heaven and in earth*, Eph. i. 10. The word is, *gathered them into one head*; and so suits very fitly to express our union in him. *In whom*, says he in the same Epistle, Eph. iv. 16, *the whole body is fitly compacted together*; and he adds that which agrees to our purpose, that this body *grows up and edifies itself in love*. All the members receive spirits from the same head, and are useful and serviceable one to another, and to the whole body. Thus, these brethren, receiving of the same Spirit from their head, Christ, are most strongly bent to the good of one another. If there be but a thorn in the foot, the back boweth, the head stoops down, the eyes look, the hands reach to it, and endeavor its help and ease: in a word all the members partake of the good and evil, one of another. Now, by how much this body is more spiritual and lively, so much the stronger must the union and love of the parts of it be each to every other. You are brethren by the same new birth, and born to the same inheritance, and such an one as shall not be an apple of strife amongst you, to beget debates and contentions: no, it is enough for all, and none shall prejudge another, but you shall have joy in the happiness one of another: seeing you shall then be perfect in love; all harmony, no difference in judgment or in affection, all your harps tuned to the same new song, which you shall sing forever. Let that love begin here, which shall never end.

The word of God made effectual to Regeneration only by the Spirit of God.

So that this efficacy of the word to prove successful seed, doth not hang upon the different abilities of the preachers, their having more or less rhetoric or learning. It is true, eloquence hath a great advantage in civil and moral things to persuade, and to draw the hearers by the ears, almost which way it will; but in this spiritual work, to revive a soul, to beget it anew, the influence of Heaven is the main thing requisite. There is no way so common and plain, (being warranted by God in the delivery of saving truth,) but the Spirit of God can revive the soul by it; and the most skilful and authoritative way, yea, being withal very spiritual,

yet may effect nothing, because left alone to itself. One word of holy Scripture, or of truth conformable to it, may be the principle of regeneration, to him that hath heard multitudes of excellent sermons, and hath often read the whole Bible, and hath still continued unchanged. If the Spirit of God preach that one or any such word to the soul, *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever should believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 15, it will be cast down with the fear of perishing, and driven out of itself by that, and raised up and drawn to Jesus Christ by the hope of everlasting life; it will believe on him that it may have life and be inflamed with the love of God, and give itself to Him who so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son to purchase for us that everlasting life. Thus may that word prove this immortal seed, which, though very often read and heard before, was but a dead letter. A drop of those liquors which are called spirits, operates more than large draughts of other waters: one word spoken by the Lord to the heart, is all spirit, and doth that which whole streams of man's eloquence could never effect.

In hearing of the word, men look usually too much upon men, and forget from what spring the word hath its power; they observe too narrowly the different hand of the sowers, and too little depend on His hand, who is great Lord of both seed-time and harvest. Be it sown by a weak hand, or a stronger, the immortal seed is still the same; yea, suppose the worst, that it be a foul hand that sows it, that the preacher himself be not so sanctified and of so edifying a life as you would wish, yet, the seed itself being good, contracts no defilement, and may be effectual to regeneration in some, and to the strengthening of others; although he that is not renewed by it himself, cannot have much hope of success, nor reap much comfort by it, and usually doth not seek nor regard it much; but all instruments are alike in an Almighty hand.

All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass; the grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away. I Pet. i: 24.

This natural life is compared, even by natural men, to the vainest things, and scarcely find they things light enough to express its *vanity*; as it is here called *grass*, so they have compared the generations of men to the leaves of trees. But the light of Scripture doth most discover this, and it is a lesson that requires the Spirit of God to teach it aright, *Teach us* (says Moses, Psal. xc. 12) *so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*. And David (Psal. xxix. 4,) *Make me to know my life, how frail I am*. So James iv. 14, *What is your life? it is even a vapor*. And here it is called *grass*. So Job xiv. 1, 2 *Man that*

*is born of a woman, is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down.*

Grass hath its root in the earth, and is fed by the moisture of it for a while ; but besides that it is under the hazard of such weather as favors it not, or of the scythe that cuts it down ; give it all the forbearance that may be, let it be free from both those, yet how quickly will it wither of itself ! Set aside those many accidents, the smallest of which is able to destroy our natural life, the diseases of our own bodies, and outward violences, and casualties that cut down many in their greenness, in the flower of their youth, the utmost term is not long ; in the course of nature it will wither. Our life is indeed a lighted torch, either blown out by some stroke or some wind, or, if spared, yet within a while it burns away, and will die out of itself.

*And all the glory of man.*] This is elegantly added. There is indeed a great deal of seeming difference betwixt the outward conditions of life amongst men. Shall the rich, and honorable, and beautiful, and healthful go in together, under the same name, with the baser and unhappier part, the poor, wretched sort of the world, who seem to be born for nothing but sufferings and miseries ? At least, hath the wise no advantage beyond the fools ? Is all grass ? Make you no distinction ? No ; *all is grass*, or if you will have some other name, be it so : once, this is true, that all flesh is grass ; and if that glory which shines so much in your eyes, must have a difference, then this is all it can have,—it is but *the flower* of that same grass ; somewhat above the common grass in gayness, a little comelier, and better apparelled than it, but partaker of its frail and fading nature ; it hath no privilege nor immunity that way, yea, of the two, is the less durable, and usually shorter lived ; at the best it decays with it : *The grass withereth, the flower thereof falleth away.*

How easily and quickly hath the highest splendor or a man's prosperity been blasted, either by men's power, or by the immediate hand of God ! The Spirit of the Lord blows upon it (as Isaiah there says,) and by that, not only withers the grass, but the flower fades though never so fair. *When thou correctest man for iniquity*, says David, *thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth.* Psal. xxxix. 11. How many have the casualties of fire, or war, or shipwreck, in one day, or in one night, or in a small part of either, turned out of great riches into extreme poverty ! And the instances are not few, of those who have on a sudden fallen from the top of honor into the foulest disgraces, not by degrees, coming down the stair they went up, but tumbled down headlong. And the most vigorous beauty and strength of body, how doth a few days' sickness, or if it escape that, a few years' time, blast that flower ! Yea, those higher advantages which have somewhat both of truer and more lasting

beauty in them, the endowments of wit, and learning, and eloquence, yea, and of moral goodness and virtue, yet they cannot rise above this word, they are still, in all their glory, but the *flower of grass*; their root is in the earth. Natural ornaments are of some use in this present life, but they reach no farther. When men have wasted their strength, and endured the toil of study night and day, it is but a small parcel of knowledge they can attain to, and they are forced to lie down in the dust in the midst of their pursuit of it: that head that lodges most sciences, shall within a while be disfurnished of them all; and the tongue that speaks most languages be silenced.

The great projects of kings and princes, and they also themselves, come under this same notion: all the vast designs that are framing in their heads, fall to the ground in a moment; *They return to their dust, and in that day all their thoughts perish.* Psal. cxlvi. 4. Archimedes was killed in the midst of his demonstration.

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Hence, learn the folly and pride of man who can glory and please himself in the frail and wretched being he hath here, who doats on this poor natural life, and cannot be persuaded to think on one higher and more abiding, although the course of time, and his daily experience, tell him this truth, that *all flesh is grass*. Yea, the Prophet prefixes to these words a command of crying; they must be shouted aloud in our ears, ere we will hear them, and by that time the sound of the cry is done, we have forgotten it again. Would we consider this, in the midst of those vanities that toss our light minds to and fro, it would give us wiser thoughts, and ballast our hearts; make them more solid and steadfast in those spiritual endeavors which concern a durable condition, a being that abides forever; in comparison of which, the longest term of natural life is less than a moment, and the happiest estate of it but a heap of miseries. Were all of us more constantly prosperous than any one of us is, yet that one thing were enough to cry down the price we put upon this life, that it continues not. As he answered to one who had a mind to flatter him in the midst of a pompous triumph, by saying, What is wanting here? *Continuance*, said he. It was wisely said at any time, but wisest of all, to have so sober a thought in such a solemnity, in which weak heads cannot escape either to be wholly drunk, or somewhat giddy at least. Surely we forget this, when we grow vain upon any human glory or advantage; the color of it pleases us, and we forget that it is but a flower, and foolishly over-estimate it. This is like that madness upon flowers, which is somewhere prevalent, where they will give as much for one flower as would buy a good dwelling-house. Is it not a most foolish bargain, to bestow continual pains and diligence upon the purchasing of great posses-



sions or honors, if we believe this, that the best of them is no other than a short-lived flower, and to neglect the purchase of those glorious mansions of eternity, a garland of such flowers as wither not, an unfading crown, that everlasting life, and those everlasting pleasures that are at the right hand of God ?

The Infancy of Saints. As new born babes, &c.

The whole estate and course of their spiritual life here is called their *infancy*, not only as opposed to the corruption and wickedness of the old man, but likewise as signifying the weakness and imperfection of it, at its best in this life, compared with the perfection of the life to come ; for the weakest beginnings of grace are by no means so far below the highest degree of it possible in this life, as that highest degree falls short of the state of glory ; so that, if one measure of grace is called infancy in respect of another, much more is all grace infancy in respect of glory. And surely, as for duration, the time of our present life is far less compared to eternity, than the time of our natural infancy is to the rest of our life ; so that we may be still called but *new or lately born*. Our best pace and strongest walking in obedience here, is but as the stepping of children when they begin to go by hold, in comparison of the perfect obedience in glory when *we shall follow the Lamb wheresoever he goes*. All our knowledge here, is but as the ignorance of infants, and all our expressions of God and of his praises, but as the first stammerings of children, in comparison of the knowledge we shall have of Him hereafter, when *we shall know as we are known*, and of the praises we shall then offer Him, when that new song shall be taught us.

Desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby.

Desire the word, not that you may only hear it ; that is to fall very far short of its true end ; yea, it is to take the beginning of the work for the end of it. The ear is indeed the mouth of the mind, by which it receives the word, (as Elihu compares it, Job xxxiv. 2,) but meat that goes no farther than the mouth, you know cannot nourish. Neither ought this desire of the word to be, only to satisfy a custom ; it were an exceeding folly to make so superficial a thing the end of so serious a work. Again, to hear it only to stop the mouth of conscience, that it may not clamor more for the gross impiety of contemning it, this is to hear it, not out of desire, but out of fear. To desire it only for some present pleasure and delight that a man may find in it, is not the due use and end of it : that there is delight in it, may help to commend it to those that find it so, and so be a mean to advance

the end ; but the end it is not. To seek no more than a present delight, that vanisheth with the sound of the words that die in the air, is not to desire the word as meat, but as music, as God tells the prophet Ezekiel of his people, Ezek. xxxiii. 32. *And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument ; for they hear thy words, and they do them not.* To desire the word for the increase of knowledge, although this is necessary and commendable, and, being rightly qualified, is a part of spiritual accretion, yet, taking it as going no farther, it is not the true end of the word. Nor is the vesting of that knowledge in speech and frequent discourse of the word and the divine truths that are in it ; which, where it is governed with Christian prudence, is not to be despised, but commended ; yet, certainly, the highest knowledge, and the most frequent and skilful speaking of the word, severed from the growth here mentioned, misses the true end of the word. If any one's head or tongue should grow apace, and all the rest stand at a stay, it would certainly make him a monster ; and they are no other, who are knowing and discoursing Christians, and grow daily in that respect, but not at all in holiness of heart and life, which is the proper growth of the children of God.

If we look more particularly unto the strain and tenor of the word, it will appear most fit for increasing the graces of the Spirit in a Christian ; for there be in it particular truths relative to them, that are apt to excite them, and set them on work, and so to make them grow, as all habits do, by acting. It doth (as the Apostle's word may be translated) *stir up the sparks*, and blow them into a greater flame, make them burn clearer and hotter. This it doth both by particular exhortation to the study and exercise of those graces, sometimes pressing one, and sometimes another ; and by right representing to them their objects. The word feeds *faith*, by setting before it the free grace of God, His rich promises, and His power and truth to perform them all : shows it the strength of the new covenant, not depending upon itself, but holding in Christ, in whom all the promises of God are *yea* and *amen* : and drawing faith still to rest more entirely upon his righteousness. It feeds *repentance*, by making the vileness and deformity of sin daily more clear and visible. Still as more of the word hath admission into the soul, the more it hates sin, sin being the more discovered and the better known in its own native color ; as the more light there is in a house, the more anything that is uncleanly or deformed, is seen and disliked. Likewise it increaseth *love to God*, by opening up still more and more of His infinite excellency and loveliness. As it borrows the resemblance of the vilest things in nature, to express the foulness and hatefulness of sin, so all the beauties and dignities that are in all the creatures

are called together in the word, to give us some small scantling of that Uncreated Beauty that alone deserves to be loved. Thus might its fitness be instanced in respect to all other graces.

But above all other considerations, this is observable in the word as the increaser of grace, that it holds forth Jesus Christ to our view to look upon, not only as the perfect pattern, but as the full fountain of all grace, from *whose fulness we all receive*. The contemplating of Him as the perfect image of God, and then drawing from him as having in himself a treasure for us, these give the soul more of that image in which consists truly spiritual growth. This the apostle expresseth excellently, 2 Cor. iii. ult., speaking of the ministry of the Gospel revealing Christ, that *beholding in him* (as it is, ch. iv. ver. 6, *in his face*) *the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord*: not only that we may take the copy of his graces, but have a share of them.

If so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

No friend is so kind and friendly (as this word signifies,) and none so powerful. He is *a present help in trouble*, ready to be found: whereas others may be far off, He is always at hand, and his presence is always comfortable.

They that know God, still find Him a real, useful good. Some things and some persons are useful at one time, and others at another, but God at all times. A well furnished table may please a man while he hath health and appetite, but offer it to him in the height of a fever, how unpleasant would it be then! Though never so richly decked, it is then not only useless, but hateful to him: but the kindness and love of God is then as seasonable and refreshing to him, as in health, and possibly more; he can find sweetness in that, even on his sick bed. The choler abounding in the mouth, in a fever, doth not disrelish this sweetness; it transcends and goes above it. Thus all earthly enjoyments have but some time (as meats) when they are in season, but the graciousness of God is always sweet; the taste of that is never out of season. See how old age spoils the relish of outward delights, in the example of Barzillai, 2 Sam. xix. 35; but it makes not this distasteful. Therefore the Psalmist prays, that when other comforts forsake him and wear out, when they ebb from him and leave him on the sand, this may not; that still he may feed on the goodness of God; Psal. lxxi. 9. *Cast me not off in old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth*. It is the continual influence of His graciousness that makes them still grow like *cedars in Lebanon*, Psal. xcii. 14, 15, that makes them *bring forth fruit in old age, and to be still fat and flourishing*; to show that the Lord is upright, as it is there added, that he is (as the word imports) *still like Himself*, and his goodness ever the same.

Full chests or large possessions, may seem sweet to a man, till death present itself: but then (as the Prophet speaks of *throwing away their idols of silver and gold to the bats and toads, in the day of calamity*, Isa. ii. 20,) then, he is forced to throw away all he possesses, with disdain of it and of his former folly in doting on it: then, the kindness of friends, and wife, and children, can do nothing but increase his grief and their own: but then is the love of God the good indeed and abiding sweetness, and it best relisheth when all other things are most unsavory and uncomfortable.

God is gracious, but it is God in Christ; otherwise we cannot find Him so; therefore this is here spoken in particular of Jesus Christ, (as it appears by that which followeth) through whom all the peculiar kindness and love of God is conveyed to the soul, for it can come no other way; and the word here mentioned is the Gospel, (See ch. i. ver. *ult.* whereof Christ is the subject. Though God is mercy and goodness in Himself, yet we cannot find or apprehend Him so to us, but as we are looking through that *medium*, the Mediator. That main point of the goodness of God in the Gospel, which is so sweet to a humbled sinner, the forgiveness of sins, we know we cannot taste of, but in Christ, *In whom we have redemption*, Eph. i. 7. And all the favor that shines on us, all the grace we receive, is *of his fulness*; all our acceptance with God, our being taken into grace and kindness again, is in him. *He made us accepted in the beloved*, (ver. 6.) His grace appears in both, as it is there expressed, but it is all in Christ. Let us therefore never leave him out in our desires of tasting the graciousness and love of God: for otherwise, we shall but dishonor him, and disappoint ourselves.'

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*If ye have tasted.]* In order to this, there must be, 1. A firm believing of the truth of the promises, wherein the free grace of God is expressed and exhibited to us. 2. A particular application or attraction of that grace to ourselves, which is the drawing of those *blessings or consolation*, Isa. lxvi. 11, namely, the promises contained in the Old and New Testaments. 3. A sense of the sweetness of that grace, being applied or drawn into the soul, and that constitutes properly this taste.

No unrenewed man hath any of these in truth, not the highest kind of temporary believer; he cannot have so much as a real lively assent to the general truth of the promises; for had he that, the rest would follow. But as he cannot have the least of these in truth, he may have the counterfeit of them all; not only of assent but of application; yea, and a false spiritual joy arising from it; and all these so drawn to the life, that they may resemble much of the reality; to give clear characters of difference, is not so easy as most persons imagine; but doubtless, the true living faith of a Christian hath in itself such a particular stamp, as brings



with it its own evidence, when the soul is clear and the light of God's face shines upon it. Indeed, in the dark we cannot read, nor distinguish one mark from another; but when a Christian hath light to look upon the work of God in his own soul, although he cannot make another sensible of that by which he knows it, yet he himself is ascertained, and can say confidently in himself, "This I know, that this faith and taste of God I have is true; the seal of the Spirit of God is upon it;" and this is the reading of that *new name in the white stone, which no man knows but he that hath it*, Rev. ii. 17. There is, in a true believer, such a constant love to God for Himself, and such a continual desire after Him simply for His own excellency and goodness, as no other can have. On the other side, would an hypocrite deal truly and impartially by himself, he would readily find out something that would discover him, more or less, to himself. But the truth is, men are willing to deceive themselves, and thence arises the difficulty.

One man cannot make another sensible of the sweetness of Divine grace: he may speak to him of it very excellently, but all he says in that kind, is an unknown language to a natural man; he heareth many good words, but he cannot tell what they mean. *The natural man tastes not the things of God, for they are spiritually discerned.* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

A spiritual man himself doth not fully conceive this sweetness that he tastes of; it is an infinite goodness, and he hath but a taste of it. *The peace of God*, which is a main fruit of His goodness, *passeth all understanding*, says the Apostle, Phil. iv. 7: not only all natural understanding, (as some modify it,) but all understanding, even the supernatural understanding, of those who enjoy it. And as the godly man cannot conceive it all, so as to that which he conceives, he cannot express it all, and that which he doth express, the carnal mind cannot conceive of by his expression.

But he that hath indeed tasted of this goodness, O how tasteless are those things to him that the world call sweet! As when you have tasted somewhat that is very sweet, it disrelishes other things after it. Therefore can a Christian so easily either want, or use with disregard the delights of this earth. His heart is not upon them: for the delight that he finds in God carrieth it unspeakably away from all the rest, and makes them in comparison seem sapless to his taste.

#### THE NATURE, THE MATERIALS, AND STRUCTURE OF GOD'S SPIRITUAL TEMPLE.

To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual House. 1 Pet. ii. 4.

1. The nature of it is, *a spiritual building*. Time and place, we know, received their being from God, and He was eternally

before both; He is therefore styled by the prophet *The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity*, Isaiah, lvii. 15. But having made the world, He fills it, though not as contained in it, and so, the whole frame of it is His palace or temple, but after a more special manner, the higher and statelier part of it, the highest heaven; therefore it is called His *holy place*, and *the habitation of His holiness and glory*. And on earth, the houses of His public worship are called *His houses*; especially the Jewish temple in its time, having in it such a relative typical holiness, which others have not. But besides all these, and beyond them all in excellency, He hath a house wherein he dwells more peculiarly than in any of the rest, even more than in Heaven, taken for the place only, and that is this *spiritual building*. And this is most suitable to the nature of God. As our Saviour says of the necessary conformity of his worship to Himself, *God is a Spirit, and therefore will be worshipped in spirit and in truth*, John iv. 24: so, it holds of his house; He must have a spiritual one, because He is a Spirit; so God's temple is, His people.

And for this purpose chiefly did He make the world, the heaven, and the earth, that in it He might raise this spiritual building for Himself to dwell in forever, to have a number of His reasonable creatures to enjoy Him, and glorify Him in eternity. And from that eternity He knew what the dimensions, and frame, and materials of it should be. The continuance of this present world, as now it is, is but for the service of this work, like the scaffolding about it; and therefore, when this spiritual building shall be fully completed, all the present frame of things in the world, and in the Church itself, shall be taken away, and appear no more.

This building is, as the particular designation of its materials will teach us, *the whole invisible Church of God*, and each good man is a stone of this building. But as the nature of it is spiritual, it hath this privilege, (as they speak of the soul,) that it is *tota in toto, et tota in qualibet parte*: the whole Church is the spouse of Christ, and each believing soul hath the same title and dignity to be called so: thus, each of these stones is called a whole temple, *temples of the Holy Ghost*, 1 Cor. vi. 19; though, taking the Temple or Building in a completer sense, they are but each one a part, or a stone of it, as here it is expressed.

The whole excellency of this building is comprised in this, that it is *spiritual*, a term distinguishing it from all other buildings, and preferring it above them. And inasmuch as the Apostle speaks immediately after of a priesthood and sacrifices, it seems to be called a *spiritual building*, particularly in opposition to that material temple wherein the Jews gloried, which was now null, in regard of its former use, and was quickly after entirely destroyed. But while it stood, and the legal use of it stood in its fullest vigor, yet, in this respect, still it was inferior, that it was not a *spiritual*

house made up of *living stones*, as this, but of a like matter with other earthly buildings.

This spiritual house is the palace of the Great King, or his temple. The Hebrew word for *palace* and *temple* is one. God's temple is a palace, and therefore must be full of the richest beauty and magnificence, but such as agrees with the nature of it, a spiritual beauty. In that Psalm that wishes so many prosperities, one is, that *their daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace*, Psal. cxliv. 12. Thus is the church: she is called the *King's daughter*, Psal. xlv. 13; but her comeliness is invisible to the world, *she is all glorious within*. Through sorrows and persecutions, she may be smoky and black to the world's eye, as the *tents of Kedar*; but in regard of spiritual beauty, *she is comely as the curtains of Solomon*. And in this the Jewish temple resembles it aright, which had most of its richest beauty in the inside. Holiness is the gold of this spiritual house, and it is inwardly enriched with that.

The glory of the Church of God consists not in stately buildings of temples, and rich furniture, and pompous ceremonies; these agree not with its spiritual nature. Its true and genuine beauty is, to grow in spirituality, and so to be liker itself, and to have more of the presence of God, and His glory filling it as a cloud. And it hath been observed, that the more the Church grew in outward riches and state, the less she grew, or rather the more sensibly she abated in spiritual excellencies. But the spiritualness of this Building will better appear in considering particularly,

2dly. The *materials* of it, as here expressed: *To whom coming, &c. ye also, as living stones, are, &c.* Now the whole building is Christ mystical, Christ together with the entire body of the elect: He as the foundation, and they as the stones built upon him; He, the living stone, and they likewise, by union with him, living stones; He, *having life in himself*, as he speaks, John vi., and they deriving it from him; He, primitively living, and they, by participation. For therefore is he called here a *living stone*, not only because of his immortality and glorious resurrection, being a *Lamb that was slain, and is alive again forever*, but because he is the principle of spiritual and eternal life unto us, a living foundation that transfuses this life into the whole building, and every stone of it, *In whom* (says the Apostle, Ephes. ii. 21,) *all the building is fitly framed together*. It is the Spirit that flows from Him, which enlivens it, and knits it together, as a living body; for the same word is used, Ch. iv. 16, for the Church under the similitude of a body. When it is said, Ch. ii. 20, *to be built upon the foundation of the Prophets and Apostles*, it only refers to their doctrine concerning Christ; and therefore it is added, that He, as being the subject of their doctrine, is the *chief corner-stone*. The foundation, then, of the Church, lies not in *Rome*,

but in Heaven, and therefore is out of the reach of all enemies, and above the power of *the gates of hell*. Fear not, then, when you see the storms arise, and the winds blow against this spiritual building, for *it shall stand*; *it is built upon an invisible immovable Rock*; and that great *Babylon*, Rome itself, that, under the false title and pretence of supporting this Building is working to overthrow it, shall be utterly overthrown, and laid equal with the ground, and never be rebuilt again.

But this *Foundation-stone*, as it is commended by its quality, that it is a *living* and enlivening stone, having life and giving life to those that are built on it, so it is also further described by God's choosing it, and by its own worth; in both opposed to men's disesteem, and therefore it is said here, to be *chosen of God and precious*. God did indeed from eternity contrive this Building, and choose this same foundation, and accordingly, in the fulness of time, did perform His purpose; so the thing being one, we may take it either for His purpose, or the performance of it, or both; yet it seems most suitable to the strain of the words, and to the place after alleged, in respect to *laying him in Zion* in opposition to the rejection of men, that we take it for God's employing of Jesus Christ in the work of our redemption. He alone was fit for that work; it was utterly impossible that any other should bear the weight of that service (and so of this building,) than He who was Almighty. Therefore the Spouse calls him *the select*, or *choice of ten thousand*, yet he was *rejected of men*. There is an antipathy (if we may so speak) betwixt the mind of God and corrupt nature; the things that are highly esteemed with men, are abomination to God; and thus we see here, that which is highly esteemed with God, is cast out and *disallowed by men*. But surely there is no comparison; the choosing and esteem of God stands; and by that, (judge men of Christ as they will,) he is the foundation of this Building. And he is in true value answerable to this esteem: he is *precious*, which seems to signify a kind of inward worth, hidden from the eyes of men, blind unbelieving men, but well known to God, and to those to whom he reveals him. And this is the very cause of his rejection by the most, the ignorance of his worth and excellency; as a precious stone that the skilful lapidary esteems of great value, an ignorant beholder makes little or no account of.

These things hold likewise in the other stones of this Building; they, too, are *chosen* before time: all that should be of this Building, fore-ordained in God's purpose, all written in that book beforehand, and then, in due time, they are chosen, by actual calling, according to that purpose, hewed out and severed by God's own hand, out of the quarry of corrupt nature; dead stones in themselves, as the rest, but made living, by his bringing them to Christ, and so made truly *precious*, and accounted precious by



Him who hath made them so. All the stones in this Building, are called *God's jewels*, Mal. iii. 17. Though they be vilified, and scoffed at, and despised by men, though they pass for fools and the refuse of the world, yet they may easily digest all that, in the comfort of this, if they are chosen of God, and precious in His eyes. This is the very lot of Christ, and therefore by that the more welcome, that it conforms them to Him,—suits these stones to their Foundation.

And if we consider it aright, what a poor despicable thing is the esteem of men ! How soon is it past ! *It is a small thing for me*, says the Apostle Paul, *to be judged of men*, 1 Cor. iv. 3. Now that God often chooses for this building such stones as men cast away as good for nothing, see 1 Cor. i. 26. And where he says, Isa. lvii. 15, that He *dwells in the high and holy place*, what is His other dwelling ? His habitation on earth, is it in great palaces and courts ? No ; but *with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit*. Now, these are the basest in men's account ; yet He chooses them, and prefers them to all other palaces and temples. Isa. lxvi. 1, 2. *Thus saith the Lord, The Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool : Where is the house that ye build unto me ? and where is the place of my rest ? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord : But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.* q. d. You cannot gratify me with any dwelling, for I myself have made all, and a surer house than any you can make me, *The heaven is my throne, and the earth my footstool* : but I, who am so high, am pleased to regard the lowly.

3dly we have the *structure*, or way of building. *To whom coming.*] First, *coming*, then, *built up*. They that come unto Christ, come not only from the world that lieth in wickedness, but out of themselves. Of a great many that seem to come to Christ, it may be said, that they are not come to Him, *because they have not left themselves*. This is believing on him, which is the very resigning of the soul to Christ, and living by him. *Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life*, says Christ, John v. 40. He complains of it as a wrong done to him ; but the loss is ours. It is his glory to give us life who are dead ; but it is our happiness to receive that life from him. Now these stones come unto their foundation ; which imports the moving of the soul to Christ, being moved by his Spirit, and that the will acts, and willingly (for it cannot act otherwise,) but still as being actuated and drawn by the Father : John vi. 65. *No man can come to me except the Father draw him*. And the outward mean of drawing, is, by the word ; it is the sound of that harp, that brings the stones of this spiritual building together. And then, being united to Christ, they are built up ; that is, as St. Paul expresses it, Ephes. ii. 21. *they grow up unto a holy temple in the Lord*.

In times of peace, the Church may dilate more, and build as it were into breadth, but in times of trouble, it arises more in height; it is then built upwards: as in cities where men are straitened, they build usually higher than in the country. Notwithstanding the Church's afflictions, yet still the building is going forward; it is built as Daniel speaks of Jerusalem, *in troublous times*. And it is this which the Apostle intends, as suiting with his foregoing exhortation: this passage may be read exhortatively too; but taking it rather as asserting their condition, it is for this end, that they may remember to be like it, and grow up. For this end he expressly calls them *living stones*; an adjunct root not usual for stones, but here inseparable; and therefore, though the Apostle changes the similitude, from infants to stones, yet he will not let go this quality of living, as making chiefly for his purpose.

To teach us the necessity of growth in believers, they are therefore often compared to things that grow, to *trees planted* in fruitful growing places, as *by the rivers of water*; to *cedars in Lebanon*, where they are tallest; to *the morning light*; to infants on the breast; and here, where the word seems to refuse it, to *stones*; yet (it must, and well doth admit this unwonted epithet) they are called *living and growing stones*.

If, then, you would have the comfortable persuasion of this union with Christ, see whether you find your souls established upon Jesus Christ, finding him as your strong foundation; not resting on yourselves, nor on any other thing either within you, or without you, but supported by him alone; drawing life from him, by virtue of that union, as from a living foundation, so as to say with the Apostle, *I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*. Gal. ii. 20.

As these stones are built on Christ by faith, so they are cemented one to another by love; and, therefore, where that is not, it is but a delusion for persons to think themselves parts of this Building. As it is knit to him, it is knit together in itself through him; and if dead stones in a building support and mutually strengthen one another, how much more ought *living stones* in an active, lively way so to do! The stones of this Building keep their place: the lower rise not up to be in the place of the higher. As the Apostle speaks of the parts of the body, so the stones of this building in humility and love keep their station, and grow up in it, *edifying in love*, saith the Apostle, Eph. iv. 16; importing, that the want of this much prejudices edification.

These stones, because they are living, therefore grow in the life of grace and spiritualness, being a *spiritual building*: so that if we find not this, but our hearts are still carnal, and glued to the earth, *minding earthly things*, wiser in those than in spirituals, this evidences strongly against us, that we are not of this Building. How few of us have that spiritualness that becomes the

temples of the Holy Ghost, or the stones of that Building! Base lusts are still lodging and ruling within us, and so our hearts are as cages of unclean birds and filthy spirits.

Consider this as your happiness, to form part of this Building, and consider the unsolidness of other comforts and privileges. If some have called those stones happy, that were taken for the building of temples or altars, beyond those in common houses, how true is it here! Happy indeed the stones that God chooses to be living stones in this spiritual temple, though they be hammered and hewed to be polished for it, by afflictions and the inward work of mortification and repentance. It is worth the enduring of all, to be fitted for this Building. Happy they, beyond all the rest of men, though they be set in never so great honors, as prime parts of politic buildings, (states and kingdoms,) in the courts of kings, yea, or kings themselves. For all other buildings, and all the parts of them shall be demolished and come to nothing, from the foundation to the cope-stone; all your houses, both cottages and palaces; *the elements shall melt away, and the earth, with all the works in it, shall be consumed*, as our Apostles hath it. (2 Pet. iii. 10.) But this spiritual Building shall grow up to Heaven; and being come to perfection, shall abide forever in perfection of beauty and glory. In it shall be found *no unclean thing*, nor unclean person, but only they *that are written in the Lamb's book of life*.

#### Spiritual Sacrifices.

Our *bodies* are to be presented a *living sacrifice*, Rom. xii. 1; and they are not that without our souls. It is our heart given, that gives all the rest, for that commands all. *My son give me thy heart*, and then the other will follow, *thine eyes will delight in my ways*. This makes the eyes, ears, tongue, and hands, and all, to be holy, as God's peculiar property; and being once given and consecrated to Him, it becomes sacrilege to turn them to any unholy use. This makes a man delight to hear and speak of things that concern God, and to think on Him frequently, to be holy in his secret thoughts, and in all his ways. In everything we bring Him, every thanksgiving and prayer we offer, His eye is upon the heart: He looks if it be along with our offering, and if He miss it, He cares not for all the rest, but throws it back again.

The heart must be offered withal, and the whole heart, all of it entirely given to Him. *Se totum obtulit Christus pro nobis*: Christ offered up his whole self for us. In another sense, which crosses not this, thy heart must not be *whole* but *broken*. Psal. li. 17. But if thou find it unbroken, yet give it Him, with a desire that it may be broken. And if it be broken, and if, when thou hast given it Him, He break it more, yea and melt it too, yet thou shalt not repent thy gift; for He breaks and melts it, that He may

refine it, and make it up a new and excellent frame, and may impress His own image on it, and make it holy, and so like to Himself.

Let us then give Him ourselves, or nothing; and to give ourselves to Him, is not his advantage, but ours. As the philosopher said to his poor scholar, who, when others gave him great gifts, told him, *He had nothing but himself to give; It is well, said he, and I will endeavor to give thee back to thyself, better than I received thee*;—thus doth God with us, and thus doth a Christian make himself his daily sacrifice: he renews this gift of himself every day to God, and receiving it every day bettered again, still he hath the more delight in giving it as being fitter for God, the more it is sanctified by former sacrificing.

Acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

The children of God do delight in offering sacrifices to Him; but if they might not know that they were well taken at their hands, this would discourage them much; therefore this is added. How often do the godly find it in their sweet experience, that when they come to pray, He welcomes them, and gives them such evidences of His love, as they would not exchange for all worldly pleasures! And when this doth not so presently appear at other times, yet they ought to believe it. He accepts themselves and their ways when offered in sincerity though never so mean; though they sometimes have no more than a sigh or a groan, it is most properly a spiritual sacrifice.

Stay not away because thou, and the gifts thou offerest, are inferior to the offering of others. No, none are excluded for that; only give what thou hast, and act with affection, for that he regards most. Under the Law, they who had not a lamb, were welcome with a pair of pigeons. So that the Christian may say: *What I am, Lord, I offer myself unto Thee, to be wholly Thine; and had I a thousand times more of outward or inward gifts, all should be Thine; had I a greater estate, or wit, or learning, or power, I would endeavor to serve Thee with all. What I have, I offer Thee, and it is most truly Thine; it is but of Thy own that I give Thee.* No one needs forbear sacrifice for poverty, for what God desires, is, the heart, and there is none so poor, but hath a heart to give him.

Wherefore it is contained in the Scripture; behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. I. Pet. 2: 6.

Let this commend the Scriptures much to our diligence and affection, that their great theme is, our Redeemer, and redemption wrought by Him; that they contain the doctrine of his excellen-



cies,—are the lively picture of his matchless beauty. Were we more in them, we should daily see more of him in them, and so of necessity love him more. But we must look within them: the letter is but the case; the spiritual sense is what we should desire to see. We usually huddle them over, and see no further than their outside, and therefore find so little sweetness in them: we read them, but we *search* them not, as he requires. Would we dig into those golden mines, we should find treasures of comfort that cannot be spent, but which would furnish us in the hardest times.

The prophecy here cited, if we look upon it in its own place, we shall find inserted in the middle of a very sad denunciation of judgment against the Jews. And this is usual with the prophets, particularly with this evangelical prophet Isaiah, to uphold the spirits of the godly, in the worst times, with this one great consolation, the promise of the Messiah, as weighing down all, alike temporal distresses and deliverances. Hence are those sudden ascents (so frequent in the Prophets) from their present subject to this great *Hope of Israel*. And if this expectation of a Saviour was so pertinent a comfort in all estates, so many ages before the accomplishment of it, how wrongfully do we undervalue it being accomplished, if we cannot live upon it, and answer all with it, and sweeten all our griefs, with this advantage, that there is *a foundation stone laid in Zion*, on which they that are builded shall be sure not to be ashamed!

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To be built on Christ, is plainly to believe in him. But in this they most deceive themselves; they hear of great privileges and happiness in Christ, and presently imagine it as all theirs, without any more ado; as that mad man of Athens, who wrote up all the ships that came into the haven, for his own. We consider not what it is to believe in him, nor what is the necessity of this believing, in order that we may be partakers of the salvation that he hath wrought. It is not they that have heard of him, or that have some common knowledge of him, or that are able to discourse of him, and speak of his person and nature aright, but *they that believe in him*. Much of our knowledge is like that of the poor philosopher, who defineth riches exactly, and discourseth of their nature, but possesseth none; or we are as a geometrician, who can measure land exactly in all its dimensions, but possesseth not a foot thereof. And truly it is but a lifeless unsavoury knowledge that men have of Christ by all books and study, till he reveal himself and persuade the heart to *believe in him*. Then, indeed, when it sees him, and is made one with him, it says of all the reports it heard, *I heard much, yet the half was not told me*. There is in lively faith, when it is infused into the soul, a clearer knowledge of Christ and his excellency than before,

and with it, a recumbency of the soul upon him as the foundation of its life and comfort; a resolving to rest on him, and not to depart from him upon any terms. Though I be beset on all hands, be accused by the Law, and by mine own conscience, and by Satan, and have nothing to answer for myself, yet, here I will stay, for I am sure in him there is salvation, and no where else. All other refuges are but lies, (as it is expressed in the words before these in the Prophet,) poor base shifts that will do no good. God hath laid this Precious Stone in Sion, for this very purpose, that weary souls may rest upon it; and why should not I make use of it according to His intention? He hath not forbid any, how wretched soever, to believe, but commands it, and Himself works it where he will, even in the vilest sinners.

Think it not enough that you know this Stone is laid, but see whether you are built on it by faith. The multitude of imaginary believers lie round about it, but they are never the better nor the surer for that, any more than stones that lie loose in heaps near unto a foundation, but are not joined to it.—There is no benefit to us by Christ, without union with him; no comfort in his riches, without an interest in them, and a title to them, by virtue of that union. Then is the soul right when it can say, *He is altogether lovely*, and as the Spouse, (Cant. iii. 16,) *He is mine, my well beloved*. This union is the spring of all spiritual consolations. And faith, by which we are thus united, is a Divine work. He that hath laid this Foundation in Sion with his own hand, works likewise, with the same hand, faith in the heart, by which it is knit to this corner-stone. It is not so easy as we imagine, to believe. See Eph. i. 19. Many that think they believe, are, on the contrary, like those of whom the Prophet there speaks, as *hardened in sin* and carnally secure, whom he represents as in covenant with hell and death, walking in sin, and yet promising themselves impunity.

#### Errors concerning Faith.

There is a twofold mistake concerning faith: on the one side, they that are altogether void of it, abusing and flattering themselves in a vain opinion that they have it; and, on the other side, they that have it, misjudging their own condition, and so depriving themselves of much comfort and sweetness that they might find in their believing.

The former is the worse, and yet by far the commoner evil.

What one says of wisdom, is true of faith: *Many would seek after it, and attain it, if they did not falsely imagine that they have attained it already.\** There is nothing more contrary to the lively nature of faith, than for the soul not to be at all busied

\* Puto multos potuisse ad sapientiam pervenire, nisi putassent se jam pervenisse.  
SENECA. *De Tranquillitate*.

with the thoughts of its own spiritual condition, and yet, this very character of unbelief passes with a great many for believing. They doubt not, that is, indeed they consider not what they are; their minds are not at all on these things; are not awakened to seek diligently after Jesus, so as not to rest till they find him. They are well enough without him; it suffices them to hear there is such a one, but they ask not themselves, Is he mine, or no? Surely, if that be all—not to doubt, the brutes believe as well as they. It were better, out of all question, to be laboring under doubtings, if it be a more hopeful condition, to find a man groaning and complaining, than speechless, and breathless, and not stirring at all.

There be in spiritual doubtings two things; there is a solicitous care of the soul concerning its own estate, and a diligent inquiry into it, and that is laudable, being a true work of the Spirit of God; but the other thing in them, is, perplexity and distrust arising from darkness and weakness in the soul. Where there is a great deal of smoke, and no clear flame, it argues much moisture in the matter, yet it witnesseth certainly that there is fire there; and therefore, dubious questioning of a man concerning himself, is a much better evidence, than that senseless deadness which most take for believing. Men that know nothing in sciences, have no doubts. He never truly believed, who was not made first sensible and convinced of unbelief. This is the Spirit's first errand in the world, to *convince it of sin*; and the sin is this, that *they believe not*, John xvi. 8, 9. If the faith that thou hast, grew out of thy natural heart of itself, be assured it is but a weed. The right plant of faith is always set by God's own hand, and it is watered and preserved by Him; because exposed to many hazards, He watches it night and day. Isa. xxvii. 3. *I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it; I will keep it night and day.*

Again, how impudent is it in the most, to pretend they believe, while they wallow in profaneness! If faith unite the soul unto Christ, certainly it puts it into participation of his Spirit; *for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*, says St. Paul. This faith in Christ brings us into communion with God. Now, *God is light*, says St. John, and he therefore infers, *If we say we have fellowship with God, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth*, 1 John i. 6. The lie appears in our practice, an unsuitableness in our carriage; as one said of him that signed his verse wrong, *Fecit solæcismum manu*.

But there be imaginary believers who are a little more refined, who live after a blameless, yea, and a religious manner, as to their outward behavior, and yet are but appearances of Christians, have not the living work of faith within, and all these exercises are *dead works*, in their hands. Amongst these, some may have



such motions within them as may deceive themselves, while their external deportment deceives others ; they may have some transient touches of desire to Christ, upon the unfolding of his excellencies in the preaching of the word, and upon some conviction of their own necessity, and may conceive some joy upon thoughts of apprehending him ; and yet, all this proves but a vanishing fancy, an embracing of a shadow. And because men who are thus deluded, meet not with Christ indeed, do not really find his sweetness, therefore, within a while, they return to the pleasures of sin, and *their latter end proves worse than their beginning*, 1 Pet. ii. 20. Their hearts could not possibly be steadfast, because there was nothing to fix them on, in all that work wherein Christ himself was wanting.

#### Influence of true Faith.

Faith knits the heart to a Holy Head, a pure Lord, the Spring of purity, and therefore cannot choose but make it pure : it is a beam from Heaven, that raises the mind to a heavenly temper. Although there are remains of sin in a believing soul, yet, it is a hated, wearisome guest there. It exists there, not as its delight, but as its greatest grief and malady, which it is still lamenting and complaining of ; it had rather be rid of it than gain a world. Thus the soul is purified from the love of sin.

#### Believers a Royal Priesthood.

There is no doubt that this Kingly Priesthood is the common dignity of all believers : *this honor have all the Saints*. They are kings, have victory and dominion given them over the powers of darkness and the lusts of their own hearts, that held them captive, and domineered over them before. Base, slavish lusts, not born to command, yet are the hard taskmasters of unrenewed minds ; and there is no true subduing of them, but by the power and Spirit of Christ. They may be quiet for a while in a natural man, but they are then but asleep ; as soon as they awake again, they return to hurry and drive him with their wonted violence. Now this is the benefit of receiving the kingdom of Christ into a man's heart, that it makes him a king himself. All the subjects of Christ are kings, not only in regard of that pure crown of glory they hope for, and shall certainly attain, but in the present, they have a kingdom which is the pledge of that other, overcoming the World, and Satan, and themselves, by the power of faith. *Mens bona regnum possidet*, A good mind is a kingdom in itself, it is true ; but there is no mind truly good, but that wherein Christ dwells. There is not any kind of spirit in the world, so noble as that spirit that is in a Christian, the very Spirit of Jesus Christ,



that great king, the *Spirit of Glory*, as our Apostles calls it below, ch. iv. This is a sure way to ennoble the basest and poorest among us. This royalty takes away all attainders, and leaves nothing of all that is passed to be laid to our charge, or to dishonor us.

The Spiritual Priesthood of Believers, compared with the Levitical Priesthood.

Believers are not shut out from God, as they were before, but, being in Christ, are brought near unto Him, and have free access to the throne of His grace, Heb. x. 21, 22. They resemble, in their spiritual state, the legal priesthood very clearly, I. In their consecration; II. In their Service; and III. In their Laws of Living.

I. In their consecration. The levitical priests were, I. Washed; therefore this is expressed, Rev. i. 5, *He hath washed us in his blood*, and then follows, *and hath made us kings and priests*. There would have been no coming near unto God in his holy services as his priests, unless we had been cleansed from the guiltiness and pollution of our sins. This that pure and purifying Blood doth; and it alone. No other laver can do it; no water but that *fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness*, Zech. xiii. 1. No blood, none of all that blood of Legal sacrifices, (Heb. ix. 12,) but only the blood of that spotless Lamb that *takes away the sins of the world*: John i. 29. So with this, 2. We have that other ceremony of the priest's consecration, which was by sacrifice, as well as by washing; for Christ at once offered up himself as our sacrifice, and let out his blood for our washing. With good reason is that prefixed there, Rev. i. 5. *He hath loved us*, and then it follows, *washed us in his blood*. That precious stream of his heart-blood, that flowed for our washing, told clearly that it was a heart full of unspeakable love that was the source of it. 3. There is anointing, namely, the graces of the Spirit, conferred upon believers, flowing unto them from Christ. *For it is of his fulness that we all receive grace for grace*; (John i. 16,) and the Apostle St. Paul says, (2 Cor. i. 16,) that *we are established and anointed in Christ*. It was poured on Him as our head, and runs down from Him unto us; He the *Christ*, and we *Christians*, as partakers of his anointing. The consecrating oil of the priests, was made of the richest ointments and spices, to shew the preciousness of the graces of God's Spirit, which are bestowed on these spiritual priests; and as that holy oil was not for common use, nor for any other persons to be anointed withal, save the priests only, so is the Spirit of grace a peculiar gift to believers. Others might have costly ointments amongst the Jews, but none of that same sort with the consecration-oil. Natural men may have very great gifts of judgment, and learning, and eloquence,

and moral virtues, but they have none of this precious oil, namely, the Spirit of Christ, communicated to them; no, all their endowments are but common and profane. That holy oil signified particularly, eminency of light and knowledge in the priests; therefore, in Christians there must be light. They that are grossly ignorant of spiritual things are surely not of this order; this anointing is said *to teach us all things*, 1 John ii. 27. That holy oil was of a most fragrant sweet smell, by reason of its precious composition; but much more sweet is the smell of that Spirit wherewith believers are anointed, those several odoriferous graces, which are the ingredients of their anointing oil, that heavenly-mindedness, and meekness, and patience, and humility, and the rest, that diffuse a pleasant scent into the places and societies where they come; their words, their actions, and their deportment smelling sweet of them. 4. The garments wherein the priests were inaugurate, and which they were after to wear in their services, are outshined by that purity and holiness wherewith all the saints are adorned; but still more by that imputed righteousness of Christ, *those pure robes* that are put upon them, wherein they appear before the Lord and are accepted in His sight. These priests are indeed *clothed with righteousness*, according to that of the Psalmist, Psal. cxxxii. 9. 5. The priests were to have the offerings put into their hands; from thence, *filling of the hand*, signifies consecrating to the priesthood. And thus doth Jesus Christ, who is the consecrator of these priests, put into their hands, by his Spirit, the offerings they are to present unto God. He furnishes them with prayers, and praises, and all other oblations, that are to be offered by them; he gives them themselves, which they are to offer a living sacrifice, rescuing them from the usurped possession of Satan and sin.

Let us consider their Services, which were divers. To name the chief, 1. They had charge of the sanctuary, and the vessels of it, and the lights, and were to keep the lamps burning. Thus the heart of every Christian is made a temple to the Holy Ghost, and he himself, as a priest consecrated unto God, is to keep it diligently, and the furniture of Divine Grace in it; to have the light of spiritual knowledge within him, and to nourish it by drawing continually new supplies from Jesus Christ. 2. The priests were to bless the people. And truly it is this spiritual priesthood, *the Elert*, that procure blessings upon the rest of the world, and particularly on the places where they live. They are daily to offer the incense of prayer, and other spiritual sacrifices unto God, as the apostle expresseth it above, verse 5, not to neglect those holy exercises together or apart. And as the priests offered it not only for themselves, but for the people, so Christians are to extend their prayers, and to entreat the blessings of God for others, especially for the public estate of the Church. As the Lord's priest, they are to offer up those praises to God, that are His due from the

other creatures, which praise Him indeed, yet cannot do it after the manner in which these priests do ; therefore they are to offer, as it were, their sacrifices for them, as the priests did for the people. And because the most of men neglect to do this, and cannot do it indeed because they are unholy, and are not of this priesthood, therefore should they be so much the more careful of it, and diligent in it. How few of those, whom the Heavens call to by their light and revelation, that they enjoy, do offer that sacrifice which becomes them, by acknowledging *the glory of God which the Heavens declare!* This, therefore, is as it were put into the hands of these priests, namely, the godly, to do.

III. Let us consider their course of life. We shall find rules given to the legal priests, stricter than to others, of avoiding legal pollutions, &c. And from these, this spiritual priesthood must learn an exact, holy conversation, keeping themselves from the pollutions of the world ; as here it follows : *A holy nation*, and that of necessity ; if a priesthood, then holy. They are purchased indeed to be *a peculiar treasure* to God, (Exod. xix. 5,) purchased at a very high rate. He spared not His only Son, nor did the Son spare himself : so that these priests ought to be the Lord's peculiar portion. All believers are His *clergy* ; and as they are His portion, so He is theirs. The priests had no assigned inheritance among their brethren, and the reason is added, for *the Lord is their portion* ; and truly so they needed not envy any of the rest, they had the choicest of all, the Lord of all. Whatsoever a Christian possesses in the world, yet, being of this spiritual priesthood, he is *as if he possessed it not*, (1 Cor. vii. 30,) lays little account on it. That which his mind is set upon, is, how he may enjoy God, and find clear assurance that he hath Him for his portion.

It is not so mean a thing to be a Christian as we think ; it is a holy, an honorable, a happy state. Few of us can esteem it, or do labor to find it so. No, we know not these things, our hearts are not on them, to make this dignity and happiness sure to our souls. Where is that true greatness of mind, and that holiness to be found, that become those who are *kings* and *priests* unto God ? that contempt of earthly things, and minding of Heaven that should be in such ? But surely, as many as find themselves indeed partakers of these dignities, will study to live agreeably to them, and will not fail to love that Lord Jesus who hath purchased all this for them, and exalted them to it ; yea, humbled himself to exalt them.

Now, as to the opposition of the estate of Christians to that of unbelievers. We best discern, and are most sensible of the evil or good of things by comparison. In respect of outward condition, how many be there that are vexing themselves with causeless



murmurings and discontents, who, if they would look upon the many in the world that are in a far meaner condition than they, would be cured of that evil ! It would make them not only content, but cheerful and thankful. But the difference here expressed, is far greater and more considerable than any that can be in outward things. Though the estate of a Christian is very excellent and precious, and, when rightly valued, hath enough in itself to commend it, yet it doth and ought to raise our esteem of it the higher, when we compare it both with the misery of our former condition, and with the continuing misery of those that abide still, and are left to perish in that woful estate. We have here both these parallels. The happiness and dignity to which they are chosen and called, is opposed to the rejection and misery of them that continue unbelievers and rejecters of Christ.

Not only natural men, but even they that have a spiritual life in them, when they forget themselves, are subject to look upon the things that are before them with a natural eye, and to think hardly, or at least doubtfully, concerning God's dispensations, beholding the flourishing and prosperities of the ungodly, together with their own sufferings and distresses. Thus, Psal. lxxxiii. But when they turn the other side of the medal, and view them with a right eye, and by a true light, they are no longer abused with those appearances. When they consider unbelievers *as strangers*, yea, *enemies to God*, and slaves to Satan, held fast in the chains of their own impenitency, and unbelief, and by these bound over to eternal death, and then see themselves called to the liberties and dignities of the Sons of God, partakers of the honor of the only-begotten Son, on whom they have believed, made by him *kings and priests unto God the Father*, then, surely, they have other thoughts. It makes them no more envy, but pity the ungodly, and account all their pomp, and all their possessions, what they are indeed, no other than a glistening misery, and account themselves happy in all estates. It makes them say with David, *The lines are fallen to me in a pleasant place, I have a goodly heritage*. It makes them digest all their sufferings and disgraces with patience, yea, with joy, and think more of praising than complaining, more of shewing forth His honor who hath so honored them ; especially, when they consider the freeness of his grace, that it was that alone which made the difference, calling them altogether undeservedly from that same darkness and misery in which unbelievers are deservedly left.

#### Christ our Light.

He is our *light*, opposed to all kind of darkness. He is so, in opposition to the dark shadows of the ceremonial law, which possibly are here meant, as part of that darkness from which the Apostle writes that these Jews were delivered also by the knowl-



edge of Christ: when he came, *the day broke and the shadows flew away*. He is our light, as opposed likewise to the darkness of the Gentile superstitions and idolatries; therefore these two are joined by old Simeon, *A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel*, Luke ii. 34. And to all who believe among either, he is light as opposed to the ignorance, slavery, and misery, of their natural estate, teaching them by his Spirit the things of God, and reuniting them with God, who is the light of the soul. *I am*, says he, *the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness*. John viii. 12.

And it is that mysterious union of the soul with God in Christ, which a natural man so little understands, that is the cause of all that spiritual light of grace, that a believer does enjoy. There is no right knowledge of God, to man once fallen from it, but in his Son; no comfort in beholding God, but through Him; nothing but just anger and wrath to be seen in God's looks, but through Him, in whom *He is well pleased*. The Gospel shows us *the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God*, but it is *in the face of Jesus Christ*. 2 Cor. iv. 6. Therefore, the kingdom of light, as opposed to that of darkness, is called *The kingdom of his dear Son*, or, *the Son of his love*. Col. i. 13.

There is a spirit of light and knowledge flows from Jesus Christ into the souls of believers, that acquaints them with the *mysteries of the kingdom of God*, which cannot otherwise be known. And this spirit of knowledge is withal a spirit of *holiness*; for purity and holiness are likewise signified by this *light*. He removed that huge dark body of sin that was betwixt us and the Father, and eclipsed Him from us. The light of his countenance *sanctifieth by truth*; it is a light that hath heat with it, and hath influence upon the affections, warms them towards God and Divine things. This darkness here, is indeed the shadow of death, and they that are without Christ, are said, till he visit them, *to sit in darkness and in the shadow of death*, Luke i. 79; so, this *Light is life*, John i. 4; it doth enlighten and enliven, begets new actions and motions in the soul. The right notion that a man hath of things as they are, works upon him, and stirs him accordingly; thus this light discovers a man to himself, and lets him see his own natural filthiness, makes him loath himself, and fly from himself,—run out of himself. And the excellency he sees in God and his Son Jesus Christ, by this new light, inflames his heart with their love, fill him with estimation of the Lord Jesus, and makes the world, and all things in it that he esteemed before, base and mean in his eyes. Then from this light arise *spiritual joy and comfort*, which are frequently signified by this expression, as in that verse of the Psalmist, (the latter clause expounds the former,) *Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart*. Psal. xcvi. 11. As this *kingdom of God's dear Son*, that is, this

kingdom of *light*, hath righteousness in it, so it hath *peace and joy in the Holy Ghost*. Rom. xiv. 17. It is a false prejudice the world hath taken up against religion, that it is a sour melancholy thing : there is no truly lightsome comfortable life but it. All others, have they what they will, live in darkness ; and is not that truly sad and comfortless ? Would you think it a pleasant life, though you had fine clothes, and good diet, never to see the sun, but still to be kept in a dungeon with them ? Thus are they who live in worldly honor and plenty, but still without God ; they are in continual darkness, with all their enjoyments.

It is true the light of believers is not here perfect, and therefore neither is their joy perfect ; it is sometimes overclouded ; but the comfort is this, that it is an everlasting light, it shall never go out in darkness, as it is said in Job xviii. 5, *the light of the wicked shall* ; and it shall within awhile be perfected : there is a bright morning without a cloud that shall arise. The Saints have not only light to lead them in their journey, but much purer light at home, *an inheritance in light*. Col. i. 12. The land where their inheritance lieth, is full of light, and their inheritance itself is light ; for the vision of God for ever, is that inheritance. That city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it, for *the glory of the Lord doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof*. Rev. xxi. 23. As we said, that Increased Light is the happiness of the soul, the beginnings of it are our happiness begun ; they are beams of it sent from above, to lead us to the fountain and fulness of it. *With Thee*, says David, *is the fountain of life, and in Thy light shall we see light*. Psal. xxxvi. 9.

There are two things spoken of this Light, to commend it—*His marvellous light* ; that it is after a peculiar manner *God's*, and then, that it is *marvellous*.

All light is from Him, the light of sense, and that of reason ; therefore He is called the *Father of lights*, Jam. i. 17. But this *light of grace* is after a peculiar manner His, being a light above the reach of nature, infused into the soul in a supernatural way, the light of the elect world, where God specially and graciously resides. Natural men may know very much in natural things, and, it may be, may know much in supernatural things, after a natural manner. They may be full of school-divinity, and be able to discourse of God and his Son Christ, and the mystery of redemption, &c., and yet, they want this peculiar light, by which Christ is made known to believers. They may speak of him, but it is in the dark ; they see him not, and therefore they love him not. The light they have, is as the light of some things that shine only in the night, a cold glow-worm light that hath no heat with it at all. Whereas a soul that hath some of *this* light, God's peculiar light, communicated to it, sees Jesus Christ, and loves and delights in him, and walks with him. A little of this light is worth

a great deal, yea, more worth than all that other common, speculative, and discoursing knowledge that the greatest doctors can attain unto. It is of a more excellent kind and original; it is from Heaven, and you know that one beam of the sun is of more worth than the light of ten thousand torches together. It is a pure, undecaying, heavenly light, whereas the other is gross and earthly, (be it never so great,) and lasts but awhile. Let us not therefore think it incredible, that a poor unlettered Christian may know more of God in the best kind of knowledge, than any the wisest and most learned natural man can do; for the one knows God only by man's light, the other knows Him by His own light, and that is the only right knowledge. As the sun cannot be seen but by its own light, so neither can God be savingly known, but by His own revealing.

Now this light being so peculiarly *God's*, no wonder if it be *marvellous*. The common light of the world is so, though, because of its commonness, we think not so of it. The Lord is marvellous in wisdom, and in power in all His works of creation and providence; but above all, in the workings of His grace. This light is unknown to the world, and so *marvellous* in the rareness of beholding it, that there be but a few that partake of it. And to them that see, it is *marvellous*; because in it they see so many excellent things that they knew not before: as if a man were born and brought up, till he came to the years of understanding, in a dungeon, where he had never seen light, and were brought forth on a sudden; or, not to need that imagination, take the man that was born blind, at his first sight, after Christ had cured him,—what wonder, think we, would seize upon him, to behold on a sudden the beauty of this visible world, especially of that sun, and that light that makes it both visible and beautiful! But much more matter of admiration is there in this light, to the soul that is brought newly from the darkness of corrupt nature! Such persons see as it were a new world, and in it such wonders of the rich grace and love of God, such matchless worth in Jesus Christ the Sun of Righteousness, that their souls are filled with admiration. And if this light of *grace* be so *marvellous*, how much more *marvellous* shall the light of *glory* be in which it ends!

As there are chains of eternal darkness upon damned spirits, which shall never be taken off, wherein they are *said to be reserved to the judgment of the great day*, so there are chains of spiritual darkness upon the unconverted soul, that can be taken off by no other hand but the powerful hand of God. He calls the sinner to *come forth*, and withal causes, by the power of that His voice, the bolts and fetters to fall off, and enables the soul to *come forth* into the light. It is an operative word that effects what it bids, as that in the creation, *He said, Let there be light, and it was light*, to which the Apostle hath reference, 2 Cor. iv. 6, when



he says, *God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into your hearts.* God calls man. He works with him indeed as with a reasonable creature, but surely, He likewise works as Himself, as an Almighty Creator. He works strongly and sweetly, with an Almighty easiness. One man may call another to this light, and if there be no more, he may call long enough to no purpose; as they tell of Mahomet's miracle that misgave,—he called a mountain to come to him, but it stirred not. But His call that shakes and removes the mountains, doth, in a way known to Himself, turn and wind the heart which way He pleaseth. *The voice of the Lord is powerful and full of majesty.* Psal. xxix.

4. If He speaks once to the heart, it cannot choose but follow Him, and yet most willingly chooses that. The workings of grace, (as oil, to which it is often compared,) do insensibly and silently penetrate, and sink into the soul, and dilate themselves through it. That word of His own calling, disentangles the heart from all its nets, as it did the disciples from theirs, to follow Christ. That call which brought St. Matthew presently from his receipt of custom, puts off the heart from all its customs, and receipts too; makes it reject gains and pleasures, and all that hinders it, to go after Christ. And it is a call that touches the soul so as the touch of Elijah's mantle, that made Elisha follow him. *Go back,* said he, *for what have I done unto thee?* Yet he had done so much, as made him forsake all to go with him. 1 Kings xix. 20. And this every believer is most ready to acknowledge, who knows what the rebellion of his heart was, and what his miserable love of darkness was, that the gracious, yet mighty call of God, was what drew him out of it: and therefore he willingly assents to that which is the *Third* thing to be spoken of, that it becomes him, as being the End of his Calling, to *shew forth His praise*, who hath so mercifully, and so powerfully called him from so miserable, to so happy an estate.

#### The Mercy of God in Christ.

There is nothing doth so kindly work repentance, as the right apprehension of the mercy and love of God. The beams of that love are more powerful to melt the heart, than all the flames of mount Sinai, all the threatenings and terrors of the Law. Sin is the root of our misery; and therefore it is the proper work of this mercy, to rescue the soul from it, both from the guilt and the power of it at once. Can you think there is any suitableness in it, that the peculiar people of God should despise His laws, and practice nothing but rebellions? that those in whom He hath magnified His mercy, should take pleasure in abusing it? or that He hath washed any with the blood of His Son, to the end that they may still wallow again in the mire? As if we were redeemed not



from sin, but *to sin*; as if we should say, *We are delivered to do all these abominations*, as the Prophet speaks, Jer. vii. 10. Oh! let us not dare thus abuse and affront the free grace of God, if we mean to be saved by it; but let as many as would be found amongst those that obtain mercy, walk as His people, whose peculiar inheritance is His mercy. And seeing this *grace of God hath appeared unto us*, let us embrace it, and let it effectually *teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts*. Tit. ii. 11, 12.

And if you be persuaded to be earnest suitors for this mercy, and to fly unto Jesus, who is the *true mercy-seat*, then be assured it is yours. Let not the greatest guiltiness scare you and drive you from it, but rather drive you the more to it; for the greater the weight of that misery is, under which you lie, the more need you have of this mercy, and the more will be the glory of it in you. It a strange kind of argument used by the Psalmist, and yet a sure one,—it concludes well and strongly, Psal. xxv. 7: *Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great*. The soul oppressed with the greatness of its sin lying heavy upon it, may, by that very greatness of it pressing upon it, urge the forgiveness of it at the hands of Free Mercy. It is *for thy name's sake*,—that makes it strong; the force of the inference lies in that. Thou art nothing, and worse than nothing? True; but all that ever obtained this mercy, were once so: they were *nothing* of all that which it hath made them to be; they were *not a people*, had no interest in God, were strangers to mercy, yea, *heirs of wrath*; yea, they had not so much of a desire after God, until this mercy prevented them, and shewed itself to them, and them to themselves, and so moved them to desire it, and caused them to find it, caught hold on them and plucked them out of the dungeon. And it is unquestionably still the same mercy, and fails not; ever expending, and yet never all spent, yea, not so much as at all diminished; flowing, as the rivers, from one age to another, serving each age in the present, and yet no whit the less to those that come after. He who exercises it, is *The LORD, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin*, to all that come unto Him, and yet, still *keeping mercy for thousands* that come after.

You who have obtained this mercy, and have the seal of it within you, it will certainly conform your hearts to its own nature; it will work you to a merciful compassionate temper of mind to the souls of others who have not yet obtained it. You will indeed, as the Lord doth, hate sin; but as He doth likewise, you will pity the sinner. You will be so far from misconstruing and grumbling at the long suffering of God, (as if you would have the bridge cut because you are over, as St. Augustine speaks,) that, on the contrary, your great desire will be to draw others to partake of the same mercy with you, knowing it to be rich enough; and you will, in your station, use your best diligence to bring in many to it, from love both to the souls of men and to the glory of God.

And withal, you will be still admiring and extolling this mercy, as it is manifested unto yourselves, considering what it is, and what you were before it visited you. The Israelites confessed (at the offering of the first fruits,) to set off the bounty of God, *A Syrian ready to perish was my father*; they confessed their captivity in Egypt: but far poorer and baser is our natural condition, and far more precious is that land, to the possession of which this free mercy bringeth us.

Do but call back your thoughts, you that have indeed escaped it, and look but into that pit of misery whence the hand of the Lord hath drawn you out, and you cannot fail to love Him highly, and still kiss that gracious hand, even while it is scourging you with any affliction whatsoever; because it hath once done this for you, namely, plucked you out of everlasting destruction. So David, Psal. xl. 23, as the thoughts of this change will teach us to praise, *He hath brought me up out of an horrible pit*: then follows,—*He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God*; not only redeemed me from destruction, but withal crowned me with glory and honor. Psal. ciii. 4. He not only doth forgive all our debts, and let us out of prison, but enriches us with an estate that cannot be spent, and dignifies us with a crown that cannot wither, made up of nothing of ours. These two considerations will stretch and tune the heart very high, namely, from what a low estate Grace brings a man, and how high it doth exalt him; in what a beggarly, vile condition the Lord finds us, and yet, that He doth not only free us thence, but puts such dignities on us. *He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.* Psal. cxiii. 7. Or, as Joshua the priest was stripped of his filthy garments, and had a fair mitre set upon his head, (Zech. iii. 3—5) so, those of this Priesthood are dealt withal.

Now, that we may be the deeper in the sense and admiration of this mercy, it is indeed our duty to seek earnestly after the evidence and strong assurance of it; for things work on us according to our notice and apprehensions of them, and therefore, the more right assurance we have of mercy, the more love, and thankfulness, and obedience, will spring from it. Therefore it is, that the Apostle here represents this great and happy change of estate to Christians, as a thing that they may know concerning themselves, and that they ought to seek the knowledge of, that so they may be duly affected with it. And it is indeed a happy thing, to have in the soul an extract of that great archive and act of grace towards it, that hath stood in Heaven from eternity. It is surely both a very comfortable and very profitable thing, to find and to read clearly the seal of mercy upon the soul, which is holiness, that by which a man is marked by God, as a part of his

peculiar possession that He hath chosen out of the world. And when we perceive any thing of this, let us look back, as here the Apostle would have us to do, and reflect how God has *called us from darkness, to his marvellous light.*

Right Preaching and Hearing.

Ministers are not to instruct only, or to exhort only, but to do both. To exhort men to holiness and the duties of a Christian life, without instructing them in the doctrine of faith, and bringing them to Jesus Christ, is to build a house without a foundation. And on the other side, to instruct the mind in the knowledge of Divine things, and neglect the pressing of that practice and power of godliness, which is the undivided companion of true faith, is to forget the building that ought to be raised upon that foundation once laid, which is likewise a point of very great folly. Or, if men, after laying that right foundation, do proceed to the superstructure of vain and empty speculations, it is but to *build hay and stubble*, instead of those solid truths that direct the soul in the way to happiness, which are of more solidity and worth than *gold, and silver, and precious stones.* 1 Cor. iii. 12. Christ, and the doctrine that reveals him, is called by St. Paul, *the mystery of the faith*, 1 Tim. iii. 9, and, ver. 16, *the mystery of godliness*: as Christ is the object of faith, so is he the spring and fountain of godliness. The Apostle having, we see, in his foregoing discourse unfolded the excellency of Christ in him, proceeds here to exhort them to that pure and spiritual temper of mind and course of life, that becomes them as Christians.

Those hearers are to blame, and do prejudice themselves, who are attentive only to such words and discourse as stir the affections for the present, and find no relish in the doctrine of faith, and the unfolding of those mysteries that bear the whole weight of religion, being the ground both of all Christian obedience, and all exhortations and persuasives to it. Those temporary, sudden stirrings of the affections, without a rightly informed mind, and some measure of due knowledge of God in Christ, do no good. It is the wind of a word of exhortation that stirs them for the time against their lusts, but the first wind of temptation that comes, carries them away; and thus the mind is but tossed to and fro, like a wave of the sea, with all kinds of winds, not being *rooted and grounded in the faith of Christ*, (as it is Col. ii. 7,) and so, *not rooted in the love of Christ*, (Eph. iii. 17,) which are the conquering graces that subdue unto a Christian his lusts and the world. See 1 John v. 4; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. Love makes a man to be dead to himself and to the world, and to *live to Christ who died for him.*



## The glory of God the aim of the Christian.

This is his intent, in the holiness and integrity of his life, that God may be glorified; this is the axis about which all *this good conversation* moves and turns continually.

And he that forgets this, let his conversation be never so plausible and spotless, knows not what it is to be a Christian. As they say of the eagles, who try their young ones whether they be of the right kind or not, by holding them before the sun, and if they can look steadfastly upon it, they own them, if not they throw them away: this is the true evidence of an upright and real Christian, to have a steadfast eye on the glory of God, the *Father of Lights*. In all, let God be glorified, says the Christian, and that suffices: that is the sum of his desires. He is far from glorifying in himself, or seeking to raise himself, for he knows that of himself he is nothing, but by the *free grace of God he is what he is*. "Whence any glorying to thee, rottenness and dust?" says St. Bernard. "Whence is it to thee if thou art holy? Is it not the Holy Spirit that hath sanctified thee? If thou couldst work miracles, though they were done by thy hand, yet it were not by thy power, but by the power of God."

*To the end that my glory may sing praise unto thee*, says David, Psal. xxx. 12. Whether his tongue, or his soul, or both, be meant, what he calls *his glory*, he shews us, and what use he hath for it, namely, to give the Lord glory, to sing His praises, and that then it was truly David's glory when it was so employed, in giving glory to Him whose peculiar due glory is. What have we to do in the world as His creatures, once and again His creatures, His new creatures, *created unto good works*, but to exercise ourselves in those, and by those to advance His glory, that all may return to Him from whom all is, as the rivers run back to the sea from whence they came? *Of Him, and through Him*, and therefore, *for Him are all things*, says the Apostle, Rom. xi. 36. They that serve base gods, seek how to advance and aggrandize them. The covetous man studies to make his *Mammon* as great as he can, all his thoughts and pains run upon that service, and so do the voluptuous and ambitious for theirs; and shall not they who profess themselves to be the servants of the Only Great and the Only True God, have their hearts much more, at least as much possessed with desires of honoring and exalting *Him*? Should not this be their predominant design and thought?—What way shall I most advance the glory of my God? How shall I, who am under stronger obligations than they all, set in with the heavens and the earth, and the other creatures, to declare His excellency, His greatness, and His goodness?

Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as Strangers and Pilgrims, abstain from fleshly Lusts, which war against the soul. I Pet. ii. 11.

They are called strangers in that spiritual sense which applies in common to all the saints. Possibly, in calling them thus, he alludes to the outward dispersion, but means, by the allusion, to express their spiritual alienation from the world, and interest in the New Jerusalem.

And this he uses as a very pertinent enforcement of his exhortation. Whatsoever others do, the serving of the flesh, and love of the world, are most incongruous and unseemly in you. Consider what you are. If you were citizens of this world, then you might drive the same trade with them, and follow the same lusts; but seeing you are chosen and called out of this world, and invested into a new society, made free of another city, and are therefore here but travellers passing through to your own country, it is very reasonable that there be this difference betwixt you and the world, that while they live as at home, your carriage be such as becomes strangers; not glutting yourselves with their pleasures, not surfeiting upon their delicious fruits, as some unwary travellers do abroad, but as wise strangers, living warily and soberly, and still minding most of all your journey homewards, suspecting dangers and snares in your way, and so walking with holy fear (as the Hebrew word for a *stranger* imports.)

There is, indeed, a miserable party even within a Christian; the remainder of corruption, that is no *stranger* here, and therefore keeps friendship and correspondence with the world, and will readily betray him if he watch not the more. So that he is not only to fly the *pollutions of the world* that are round about him, and to choose his steps that he be not ensnared from without; but he is to be upon a continual guard against the lusts and corruption that are yet within himself, to curb and control them, and give them resolute and flat refusals when they solicit him, and to stop up their essays and opportunities of intercourse with the world, and such things as nourish them, and so to do what he can to starve them out of the holds they keep within him, and to strengthen that new nature which is in him; to live and act according to it, though, in doing so, he shall be sure to live as a stranger here, and a despised, mocked, and hated stranger.

And it is not, on the whole, the worse that it should be so. If men in foreign countries be subject to forget their own at any time, it is surely when they are most kindly used abroad, and are most at their ease; and thus a Christian may be in some danger when he is best accommodated, and hath most of the smiles and caresses of the world; so that though he can never wholly forget his home that is above, yet his thoughts of it will be less frequent, and his desires of it less earnest, and, it may be, he

may insensibly slide into its customs and habits, as men will do that are well seated in some other country. But by the troubles and unfriendliness of the world he gains this, that when they abound most upon him, he then feels himself a stranger and remembers to behave as such, and thinks often with much delight and strong desires on his own country, and the rich and sure inheritance that lies there, and the ease and rest he shall have when he comes thither.

And this will persuade him strongly to fly all polluted ways and lusts, as fast as the world follows them. It will make him abhor *the pleasures of sin*, and use the allowable enjoyments of this earth warily and moderately, never engaging his heart to them as worldlings do, but always keeping that free,—free from that earnest desire in the pursuit of worldly things, and that deep delight in the enjoyment of them, which the men of the earth bestow upon them. There is a diligence in his calling, and prudent regard of his affairs, not only permitted to a Christian, but required of him. But yet, in comparison of his great and *high calling* (as the Apostle terms it,) he follows all his other business with a kind of coldness and indifferency, as not caring very much which way they go; his heart is elsewhere. The traveller provides himself as he can with entertainment and lodging where he comes; if it be commodious, it is well, but if not, it is no great matter. If he find but necessities, he can abate delicacies very well; for where he finds them in his way, he neither can, nor, if he could, would choose to stay there. Though his inn were dressed with the richest hangings and furniture, yet it is not his home; he must and would leave it. This is the character of ungodly men, *they mind earthly things*, Phil. iii. 19; they are drowned in them over head and ears, as we say.

If Christians would consider how little, and for how little a while, they are concerned in anything here, they would go through any state and any changes of state, either to the better or the worse, with very composed, equal minds, always moderate in their necessary cares, and never taking any care at all for the flesh, *to fulfil the lusts of it*. Rom. xiii. 14.

Let them that have no better home than this world to lay claim to, live here as at home, and serve their lusts; they that have all *their portion in this life*, no more good to look for than what can catch here, let them take their time of the poor profits and pleasures that are here; but you that have your whole estate, all your riches and pleasures laid up in Heaven, and *reserved there for you*, let your hearts be there, and your *conversation* there. This is not the place of your rest, nor of your delights, unless you would be willing to change, and to have *your good things here*, as some foolish travellers, who spend the estate they should live on at home, in little while, braving it abroad amongst strangers. Will



you, with *profane Esau, sell your birthright for a mess of pottage*,—sell eternity for a moment, and, for a moment, sell such pleasures as a moment of them is more worth than an eternity of the other.

Having your Conversation honest among the Gentiles.

*Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles.*] As the sovereign power of drawing good out of evil, resides in God, and argues His primitive goodness, so He teacheth his own children some faculty this way, that they may resemble Him in it. He teacheth them to draw sweetness out of their bitterest afflictions, and increase of inward peace from their outward troubles. And as these buffetings of the tongue are no small part of their sufferings, so they reap no small benefit by them many ways; particularly in this one, that they order their conversation the better, and walk the more exactly for it.

And this, no doubt, in Divine providence, is intended and ordered for their good, as are all their other trials. The sharp censures and evil-speakings that a Christian is encompassed with in the world, is no other than a hedge of thorns set on every side, that he go not out of his way, but keep straight on in it betwixt them, not declining to the right hand nor to the left; whereas, if they found nothing but favor and good opinion of the world, they might, as in a way unhedged, be subject to expatiate and wander out into the meadows of carnal pleasures that are about them, which would call and allure them, and often divert them from their journey.

And thus it might fall out, that Christians would deserve censure and evil-speakings the more, if they did not usually suffer them undeserved. This then turns into a great advantage to them, making their conduct more answerable to those two things that our Saviour joins, *watch and pray*; causing them to be the more vigilant over themselves, and the more earnest with God for His watching over them and conducting of them. *Make my ways straight*, says David, *because of mine enemies*, Psal. v. 8: the word is, *my observers*, or those that scan my ways, every foot of them, that examine them as a verse, or as a song of music; if there be but a wrong measure in them, they will not let it slip, but will be sure to mark it.

And if the enemies of the godly wait for their halting, shall not they scan their own paths themselves, that they may not halt? Shall they not examine them to order them, as the wicked do to censure them: still depending wholly upon the spirit of God as their guide, *to lead them into all truth*, and to teach them how *to order their conversation aright*, that it may be all of a piece, holy and blameless, and still like itself?

For so is the will God.

This is the strongest and most binding reason that can be used to a Christian mind, which hath resigned itself to be governed by that rule, to have *the will of God* for its law. Whatsoever is required of it upon that warrant, it cannot refuse. Although it crosses a man's own humor, or his private interest, yet if his heart be subjected to the will of God, he will not stand with Him in anything. One word from God, *I will have it so*, silences all, and carries it against all opposition.

It were a great point, if we could be persuaded to esteem duly of this: it were indeed all. It would make light and easy work in those things that go so hardly on with us, though we are daily exhorted to them. Is it the will of God that I should live soberly? Then, though my own corrupt will and my companions be against it, yet it must be so. Wills He that I forbear cursing and oaths, though it is my custom to use them? Yet I must offer violence to my custom, and go against the stream of all their customs that are round about me, to obey His will, who wills all things justly and holily. Will He have my charity not only liberal in giving, but in forgiving, and real and hearty in both? Will He have me *bless them that curse me, and do good to them that hate me, and love mine enemies*? Though the world counts it a hard task, and my own corrupt heart possibly finds it so, yet it shall be done; and not as upon unpleasant necessity, but willingly, and cheerfully, and with the more delight because it is difficult; for so it proves my obedience the more, and my love to Him whose will it is. Though mine enemies deserve not my love, yet He who bids me love them, does; and if He will have this the touchstone to try the uprightness of my love to Him, shall it fail there? No, His will commands me so absolutely and He Himself is so lovely, that there can be nobody so unlovely in themselves, or to me, but I can love them upon His command, and for His sake.

Honor all Men.

We owe not the same measure of esteem to all. We may, yea, we ought to take notice of the different outward quality, or inward graces and gifts of men; nor is it a fault to perceive the shallowness and weakness of men with whom we converse, and to esteem more highly those on whom God hath conferred more of such things as are truly worthy of esteem. But unto the meanest we do owe some measure of esteem, 1st, Negatively. We are not to entertain despising, disdainful thoughts of any, how worthless and mean soever. As the admiring of men, the very best, is a foolish excess on the one hand, so, the total contemning of any, the very poorest, is against this rule on the other; for that *contemning of*

*vile persons*, the Psalmist speaks of, Psal. xv. 3, and commends, is the dislike and hatred of their sin, which is their vileness, and the not accounting them for outward respects, worthy of such esteem as their wickedness does, as it were, strip them of. 2dly. We are to observe and respect the smallest good that is in any. Although a Christian be never so base in his outward condition, in body or mind, of very mean intellectuals and natural endowments, yet, they who know the worth of spiritual things, will esteem the grace of God that is in him, in the midst of all those disadvantages, as a pearl is a rough shell. Grace carries still its own worth, though under a deformed body and ragged garments, yea, though they have but a small measure of that neither—the very lowest degree of grace; as a pearl of the least size, or a small piece of gold, yet men will not throw it away, but as they say, the least shavings of gold are worth the keeping. The Jews would not willingly tread upon the smallest piece of paper in their way, but took it up; for possibly, said they, the name of God may be on it. Though there was a little superstition in this, yet truly there is nothing but good religion in it, if we apply it to men. Trample not on any; there may be some work of grace there, that thou knowest not of. The name of God may be written upon that soul thou treadest on; it may be a soul that Christ thought so much of, as to give His precious blood for it; therefore despise it not. Much more, I say, if thou canst perceive any appearance that it is such a one, oughtest thou to esteem it. Wheresoever thou findest the least trait of Christ's image, if thou lovest Him, thou wilt honor it; or if there be nothing of this to be found in him thou lookest on, yet, observe what common gift of any kind God hath bestowed on him, judgment, or memory, or faculty in his calling, or any such thing, for these in their degree are to be esteemed, and the person for them. And as there is no man so complete as to have the advantage in every thing, so there is no man so low and unworthy but he hath something wherein he is preferable even to those that in other respects are much more excellent. Or imagine thou canst find nothing else in some men, yet honor thy own nature: esteem humanity in them, especially since humanity is exalted in Christ to be one with the Deity: account of the individual as a man. And, along with this esteem goes, 3dly, that general good-will and affection due to men: Whereas there are many who do not only outwardly express, but inwardly bear more regard to some dog or horse that they love, than to poor distressed men, and in so doing, do reflect dishonor upon themselves, and upon mankind.

Humility the groundwork of External Kindness.

The outward behaviour wherein we owe honor to all, is nothing but a conformity to this inward temper of mind; for he that



inwardly despiseth none, but esteemeth the good that is in the lowest, or at least esteemeth them in that they are men, and loves them as such, will accordingly use no outward sign of disdain of any; he will not have a scornful eye, nor a reproachful tongue to move at any, not the meanest of his servants, nor the worst of his enemies; but, on the contrary, will acknowledge the good that is in every man, and give unto all that outward respect that is convenient for them, and that they are capable of, and will be ready to do them good as he hath opportunity and ability.

But instead of walking by this rule of *honoring all men*, what is there almost to be found amongst men, but a perverse proneness to dishonor one another, and every man ready to dishonor all men, that he may honor himself, reckoning that what he gives to others is lost to himself, and taking what he detracts from others, as good booty to make up himself? Set aside men's own interest, and that common civility which for their own credit they use one with another, and truly there will be found very little of this real respect to others, proceeding from obedience to God and love to men,—little disposition to be tender of their reputation and good name, and their welfare as of our own, (for so the rule is,) but we shall find mutual disesteem and defamation filling almost all societies.

And the bitter root of this iniquity is, that wicked, accursed self-love which dwells in us. Every man is naturally his own grand idol, would be esteemed and honored by any means, and to magnify that idol *self*, kills the good name and esteem of others in sacrifice to it. Hence, the narrow-observing eye and broad-speaking tongue, upon any thing that tends to the dishonor of others; and where other things fail, the disdainful upbraiding of their birth, or calling, or any thing that comes next to hand, serves for a reproach. And hence arises a great part of the jars and strifes amongst men, the most part being drunk with an over-weening opinion of themselves, and the unworthiest the most so; *The Sluggard*, says Solomon, *is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that can render a reason*, Prov. xxvi. 16: and not finding others of their mind, this frets and troubles them. They take the ready course to deceive themselves; for they look with both eyes on the failings and defects of others, and scarcely give their good qualities half an eye; while, on the contrary, in themselves, they study to the full their own advantages, and their weaknesses and defects, (as one says,) they skip over, as children do the hard words in their lesson, that are troublesome to read; and making this uneven parallel, what wonder if the result be a gross mistake of themselves? Men over-rate themselves at home: they reckon that they ought to be regarded, and that their mind should carry it; and when they come abroad, and are crossed in this, this puts them out of all temper.

But the humble man, as he is more conformable to this Divine rule, so he hath more peace by it; for he sets so low a rate upon himself in his own thoughts, that it is scarcely possible for any to go lower in judging of him; and therefore, as he pays due respect to others to the full, and gives no ground of quarrel that way, so he challenges no such debt to himself, and thus avoids the usual contests that arise in this. *Only by pride comes contention*, says Solomon, Prov. xiii. 10. A man that will walk abroad in a crowded street, cannot choose but be often jostled; but he that contracts himself, passes through more easily.

Study, therefore, this excellent grace of humility; not the personated acting of it in appearance, which may be a chief agent for pride, but true lowliness of mind, which will make you to be nothing in your own eyes, and content to be so in the eyes of others. Then will you obey this word; you will esteem all men as is meet, and not be troubled though all men disesteem you. As this humility is a precious grace, so it is the preserver of all other graces, and without it, (if they could be without it,) they were but as a box of precious powder carried in the wind without a cover, in danger of being scattered and blown away.

#### Fear God.

*Fear God.*] All the rules of equity and charity amongst men, flow from a higher principle, and depend upon it; and there is no right observing of them without due regard to that: therefore this word which expresses that principle of obedience, is fitly inserted amongst these rules; the first obligation of man being to the sovereign majesty of God who made him, and all the mutual duties of one to another being derived from that. A man may indeed, from moral principles, be of a mild inoffensive carriage, and do civil right to all men; but this answers not the divine rule even in these same things, after the way that it requires them. The spiritual and religious observance of these duties towards men, springs from a respect to God, and terminates there too; it begins and ends in Him. And generally, all obedience to His commands, both such as regulate our behaviour towards Himself immediately, and such as relate to man, doth arise from a holy fear of His name. Therefore, this *fear of God*, upon which follows necessarily *the keeping of His commandments*, is given us by Solomon as the total sum of man's business and duty, Eccl. xii. ult., and so, the way to solid happiness: he pronounces it *totum hominis, the whole of man*. After he had made his discoveries of all things besides under the sun, gone the whole circuit, and made an exact valuation, he found all besides this, to amount to nothing *but vanity and vexation of spirit*. The account he gives of all other things, was only for this purpose, to illustrate and establish this

truth the more, and to make it the more acceptable ; to be a repose after so much weariness, and such a tedious journey, and so, as he speaks there, *ver. 10*, a word of delight as well as a word of truth ; that the mind might sit down and quiet itself in this, from the turmoil and pursuit of vanity, that keep it busy to no purpose in all other things. But whereas there was emptiness and vanity, that is, just nothing, in all other things, there was not only something to be found, but everything in this one, this *fear of God*, and that *keeping of his commandments*, which is the proper fruit of fear. All the repeated declaring of vanity in other things, both severally and altogether in that book, are but so many strokes to drive and fasten this nail, (as it is there, *ver. 11*,) this word of wisdom, which is the sum of all and contains all the rest. So Job, after a large inquest for wisdom, searching for its vein, as men do for mines of silver and gold, hath the return of a *Non inventum est*, from all the creatures : *The sea says, it is not in me*, &c. But in the close, he finds it in this, *The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil that is understanding*. Job xxviii. ult.

Under this fear is comprehended all religion, both inward and outward, all the worship and service of God, and all the observance of His commandments, which is there (*Ecc. xii.*) and elsewhere, expressly joined with it, and therefore is included in it, when it is not expressed. So Job xxviii. as above, *To depart from evil is understanding*, repeating in effect the former words by these. So *Psal. cxi. 10*. It hath in it all holiness, and obedience : they grow all out of it. It is the *beginning*, and it is the top or consummation of *wisdom*, for the word signifies both.

Think it not, then, a trivial, common matter to speak or hear of this subject ; but take it as our great lesson and business here on earth. The best proficient in it have yet need to learn it better, and it requires our incessant diligence and study all our days.

This fear hath in it chiefly these things : 1. A reverential esteem of the majesty of God, which is a main, fundamental thing in religion, and moulds the heart most powerfully to the obedience of His will. 2. A firm belief of the purity of God, and of His power and justice, that He loves holiness, and hates all sin, and can and will punish it. 3. A right apprehension of the bitterness of His wrath, and the sweetness of his love ; that His incensed anger is the most terrible and intolerable thing in the world, absolutely the most fearful of all evils, and, on the other side, his love, of all good things the best, the most blessed and delightful, yea, the only blessedness. Life is the name of the sweetest good we know, and yet, *His loving kindness is better than life*, says David, *Psal. lxiii.* 3. 4. It supposes, likewise, sovereign love to God, for His own infinite excellency and goodness. 5. From all these springs



a most earnest desire to please Him in all things, and an unwillingness to offend Him in the least, and, because of our danger through the multitude and strength of temptations, and our own weakness, a continual self-suspicion, a holy fear lest we should sin, a care and watchfulness that we sin not, and deep sorrow, and speedy returning and humbling before Him, when we have sinned.

#### The Reward of the Righteous.

How often do men work earnestly, and do and suffer much for the uncertain wages of glory and thanks amongst men! And how many of them fall short of their reckoning, either dying before they came to that state where they think to find it, or not finding it where they looked for it, and so they live but to feel the pain of their disappointment! Or, if they do attain their end, such glory and thanks as men have to give them, what amounts it to? Is it any other than a handful of nothing, the breath of their mouths, and themselves much like it, a vapor dying out in the air? The most real thanks they give, their solidest rewards, are but such as a man cannot take home with him; or if they go so far with him, yet, at furthest, he must leave them at the door, when he is to enter his everlasting home. All the riches, and palaces, and monuments of honor that he had, and that are erected to him after death, as if he had then some interest in them, reach him not at all. Enjoy them who will, he does not, *he hath no portion of all that is done under the sun*; his own end is to him the end of the world.

But he that would have abiding glory, and thanks, must turn his eye another way for them. All men desire glory, but they know neither what it is, nor how it is to be sought. He is upon the only right bargain of this kind, *whose praise* (according to St. Paul's word) *is not of men, but of God*. Rom. ii. 29. If men commend him not, he accounts it no loss, nor any gain if they do: for he is bound for a country where that coin goes not, and whither he cannot carry it, and therefore he gathers it not. That which he seeks in all, is, that he may be approved and accepted of God, whose thanks are no less, to the least of those He accepts, than a crown of unfading glory. Not a poor *servant* that fears His name, and is obedient and patient for his sake, but shall be so rewarded.

There are some kinds of graces and good actions, which men (such as regard any grace) take special notice of, and commend highly,—such as are of a magnific and remarkable nature, as martyrdom, or doing or suffering for religion in some public way. There be again, other obscure graces, which, if men despise them not, yet they esteem not much, as meekness, gentleness, and patience under private crosses, known to few or none. And yet, these are of great account with God, and therefore should be so

with us : these are indeed of more universal use, whereas the other are but for high times, as we say, for rare occasions : these are every one's work, but few are called to the acting of the other. And the least of these graces shall not lose its reward, in whose person soever, as St. Paul tells us, speaking of this same subject. *Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord whether he be bond or free.* Eph. vi. 8.

This is the bounty of that great Master we serve. For what are we and all we can do, that there should be the name of reward attached to it ? Yet He keeps all in reckoning ; not a poor lame prayer, not a tear, nor a sigh poured forth before Him shall be lost. Not any cross, whether from His own hand immediately, or coming through men's hands, that is taken, what way soever it come, as out of His hand, and carried patiently, yea, and welcomed, and embraced for His sake, but He observes our so entertaining of it. Not an injury that the meanest servant bears Christianly, but goes upon account with Him. And He sets them down so, as that they bear much value through His estimate and way of reckoning of them, though in themselves they are all less than nothing ; as a worthless counter stands for hundreds or thousands, according to the place you set it in. Happy they who have to deal with such a Lord, and who, be they servants or masters, are vowed servants to Him ! *When He comes, His reward shall be with Him.* Rev. xxii. 12.

#### Duty of serving God in our own Peculiar Calling and Condition.

Grace finds a way to exert itself in every estate where it exists, and regulates the soul according to the particular duties of that estate. Whether it find a man high or low, a master or a servant, it requires not a change of his station, but works a change on his heart, and teaches him how to live in it. The same spirit that makes a Christian master pious, and gentle, and prudent in commanding, makes a Christian servant faithful, and obsequious, and diligent in obeying. A skilful engraver makes you a statue indifferently of wood, or stone, or marble, as they are put into his hand ; so, Grace forms a man to a Christian way of walking in any estate. There is a way for him in the meanest condition to glorify God, and to adorn the profession of religion ; no estate so low, as to be shut out from that ; and a rightly informed and rightly affected conscience towards God, shews a man that way, and causes him to walk in it. As the astrologers say, that the same stars that made Cyrus to be chosen king amongst the armies of men when he came to be a man, made him to be chosen king amongst the shepherd's children, when he was a child ; thus Grace will have its proper operation in every estate.

In this, men readily deceive themselves ; they can do anything

well in imagination, better than the real task that is in their hands. They presume that they could do God good service in some place of command, who serve Him not, as becomes them, in that which is by far the easier, the place of obeying, wherein he hath set them. They think that if they had the ability and opportunities that some men have, they would do much more for religion, and for God, than they do; and yet, they do nothing, but spoil a far lower part than that, which is their own, and is given them to study and act aright in. But our folly and self-ignorance abuse us: it is not our part to choose what we should be, but to be what we are, to His glory who gives us to be such. Be thy condition never so mean, yet, thy *conscience towards God*, if it be within thee, will find itself work in that. If it be little that is intrusted to thee, in regard of thy outward condition, or any other way, *be thou faithful in that little*, as our Saviour speaks, and thy reward shall not be little: *He shall make thee ruler over much.* Matt. xxv. 23.

A Spiritual mind ennobles every Employment.

As a corrupt mind debaseth the best and most excellent callings and actions, so the lowest are raised above themselves, and ennobled by a spiritual mind. Magistrates or ministers, though their calling and employments be high, may have low intentions, and draw down their high calling to those low intentions; they may seek themselves, and their own selfish ends, and neglect God. And a sincere Christian may elevate his low calling by this conscience towards God, observing His will, and intending His glory in it. An eagle may fly high, and yet have its eye down upon some carrion on the earth: even so, a man may be standing on the earth, and on some low part of it, and yet have his eye upon heaven, and be contemplating it. That which men cannot at all see in one another, is the very thing that is most considerable in their actions, namely, the principle whence they flow, and the end to which they tend. This is the form and life of actions,—that by which they are earthly or heavenly. Whatsoever be the matter of them, the spiritual mind hath that alchemy indeed, of turning base metals into gold, earthly employments into heavenly. The handy-work of an artisan or servant who regards God, and eyes Him even in that work, is much holier than the *prayer of a hypocrite*; and a servant's enduring the private wrongs and harshness of a froward master, bearing it patiently for *conscience towards God*, is more acceptable to God, than the sufferings of such as may endure much for a public good cause, without a good and upright heart.

This habitude and posture of the heart towards God, the Apostle St. Paul presses much upon servants, Eph. vi. 8, as being very



needful to allay the hard labor and harsh usage of many of them. This is the way to make all easy, to undergo it for God. There is no pill so bitter, but respect and love to God will sweeten it. And this is a very great refreshment and comfort to Christians in the mean estate of servants or other laboring men, that they may offer up their hardship and bodily labor as a sacrifice to God, and say, Lord, this is the station wherein Thou has set me in this world, and I desire to serve Thee in it. What I do is for Thee, and what I suffer I desire to bear patiently and cheerfully for Thy sake, in submission and obedience to Thy will.

The Obedience of Servants should spring from Conscience towards God.

In this there is, 1. A reverential compliance with God's disposal, both in allotting to them that condition of life, and in particularly choosing their master for them; though possibly not the mildest and pleasantest, yet the fittest for their good. There is much in firmly believing this, and in heartily submitting to it; for we would, naturally, rather carve for ourselves, and shape our own estate to our mind, which is a most foolish, yea, an impious presumption: as if we were wiser than He who hath done it, and as if there were not as much, and, it may be, more possibility of true contentment in a mean, than in a far higher condition! The master's mind is often more toiled than the servant's body. But if our condition be appointed us, at least we would have a voice in some qualifications and circumstances of it; as in this, if a man must serve, he would wish willingly that God would allot him a meek, gentle master. And so, in other things, if we must be sick, we would be well accommodated, and not want helps; but to have sickness, and want means and friends for our help, this we cannot think of without horror. But this submission to God is never right, till all that concerns us be given up into His hand, to do with it, and with every article and circumstance of it, as seems good in His eyes. 2. In this *conscience*, there is a religious and observant respect to the rule which God hath set men to walk by in that condition; so that their obedience depends not upon any external inducement, failing when that fails, but flows from an inward impression of the law of God upon the heart. Thus, a servant's obedience and patience will not be pinned to the goodness and equity of his master, but when that fails, will subsist upon its own inward ground; and so, generally in all other estates. This is the thing that makes sure and constant walking; makes a man *step even* in the ways of God. When a man's obedience springs from that unfailling, unchanging reason, the command of God, it is a natural motion, and therefore keeps on, and rather grows than abates; but they who are moved by things outward, must often fail, because those things are not constant in

their moving ; as, for instance, when a people are much acted on by the spirit of their rulers, as the Jews when they had good kings. 3. In this *conscience*, there is a tender care of the glory of God, and the adornment of religion, which the Apostle premised before these particular duties, as a thing to be specially regarded in them. The honor of our Lord's name, is that which we should set up as the mark to aim all our actions at. But, alas ! either we think not on it, or our hearts slip out, and start from their aim, *like bows of deceit*, as the word is. Psal. lxxviii. 57. 4. There is the comfortable persuasion of God's approbation and acceptance, (as it is expressed in the following verse, of which somewhat before,) and the hope of that reward He hath promised, as it is, Col. iii. 24 : *Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ. No less than the inheritance!* So then, such servants as these, are *sons and heirs of God, coheirs with Christ*. Thus he that is a servant, may be in a far more excellent state than his master. The servant may hope for, and aim at a kingdom, while the master is embracing a dunghill. And such a one will think highly of God's free grace, and the looking ever to that inheritance, makes him go cheerfully through all pains and troubles here, as *light and momentary*, and not worth the naming in comparison of *that glory that shall be revealed*. In the meantime, the best and most easy condition of the sons of God, cannot satisfy them, nor stay their sighs and groans, *waiting and longing for that day of their full redemption*. Rom. viii. 16, 23.

Now this is the great rule, not only for servants, but for all the servants of God in what state soever, *to set the Lord always before them*, Psal. xvi. 8, and to study with St. Paul, *to have a conscience void of offence towards God and man*, Acts xxiv. 16 ; to eye and to apply constantly to their actions and their inward thoughts, the command of God ; to walk by that rule abroad, and at home in their houses, and in the several ways of their calling ; (as an exact workman is ever and anon laying his rule to his work, and squaring it ;) and *for the conscience they have towards God*, to do and suffer His will cheerfully in everything, being content that He choose their condition and their trials for them ; only desirous to be assured, that He hath chosen them for His own, and given them a right to the *glorious liberty of the sons of God*, Rom viii. 21 ; still endeavoring to walk in that way which leads to it, overlooking *this moment*, and all things in it, accounting it a very indifferent matter what is their outward state here, provided they may be happy in eternity. Whether we be high or low here, bond or free, it imports little, seeing that all these differences will be so quickly at an end, and there shall not be so much as any track or footsteps of them left. With particular men, it is so in their graves ; you may distinguish the greater

from the less by their tombs, but by their dust you cannot : and with the whole world it shall be so in the end. All monuments and palaces, as well as cottages shall be made fire, as our Apostle tells us. *The elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and all the works therein, shall be burnt up.* 2 Pet. iii. 10.

Christ's Sufferings are our Example.

*Hercunto were ye called.]* The particular things that Christians are here said to be called to, are, *suffering*, as their lot, and *patience*, as their duty, even under the most unjust and undeserved sufferings.

And both these are as large as the sphere of this calling. Not only servants and others of a mean condition, who, lying low, are the more subject to rigors and injuries, but generally, all who are called to godliness, are likewise called to sufferings. 2. Tim. iii. 12. All that will follow Christ, must do it in his livery; they must take up their cross. This is a very harsh and displeasing article of the Gospel to a carnal mind, but the Scriptures conceal it not. Men are not led blindfold into sufferings, and drawn into a hidden snare by the Gospel's invitations; they are told it very often, that they may not pretend a surprisal, nor have any just plea for starting back again. So our Saviour tells his disciples, why he was so express and plain with them in this, *These things have I told you that ye be not offended*, John xvi. 1; as if he had said, I have shown you the ruggedness of your way, that you may not stumble at it, taking it to be a smooth plain one. But then, where this is spoken of, it is usually allayed with the mention of those comforts that accompany these sufferings, or of that glory which follows them. The doctrine of the Apostles, which was so verified in their own persons, was this, *That we must through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God*, Acts xiv. 22. An unpleasant way indeed, if you look no farther, but a *kingdom* at the end of it, and that *the kingdom of God*, will transfuse pleasure into the most painful step in it all. It seems a sad condition that falls to the share of godly men in this world, to be eminent in sorrows and troubles. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous*, Psalm xxxiv. 19: but that which follows, weighs them abundantly down in consolation, that the Lord Himself is engaged in their afflictions, both for their deliverance out of them in due time, and, in the mean time, for their support and preservation under them: *The Lord delivers them out of them all*, and till He does that, *He keepeth all their bones*. This was literally verified in the natural body of Christ, as St. John observes, John xix. 36, and it holds spiritually true in his mystical body. The Lord supports the spirits of believers in their troubles, with such solid consolations as are the pillars and strength of their souls, as the bones of



the body, which the Hebrew word for them imports. So, *He keepeth all his bones* ; and the desperate condition of wicked men is opposd to this, verse 21, to illustrate it, *Evil shall slay the wicked*.

Thus, John xvi. 33, they are forewarned in the close, what to expect at the world's hands, as they were divers times before in that same sermon ; but it is a sweet testament, take it altogether : *Ye shall have tribulation in the world, but peace in Me*. And seeing He hath jointly bequeathed these two to his followers, were it not great folly to renounce such a bargain, and to let go that peace for fear of this trouble ? The trouble is but *in the world*, but the *peace* is *in Him*, who weighs down thousands of worlds.

So then, they do exceedingly mistake and misreckon, who would reconcile Christ and the world, who would have the Church of Christ, or, at least, themselves for their own shares, enjoy both kinds of peace together ; would willingly have peace in Christ, but are very loath to part with the world's peace. They would be Christians, but they are very ill satisfied when they hear of anything but ease and prosperity in that estate, and willingly forget the tenor of the Gospel in this ; and so, when times of trouble and sufferings come, their minds are as new and uncouth to it, as if they had not been told of it before hand. They like better St. Peter's carnal advice to Christ, to avoid suffering, Matt. xvi. 22, than his Apostolic doctrine to Christians, teaching them, that as Christ *suffered*, so they likewise *are called to suffering*. Men are ready to think as Peter did, that Christ should favor himself more in his own body, his Church, than to expose it to so much suffering ; and most would be of Rome's mind in this, at least in affection, that the badge of the Church should be pomp and prosperity, and not the cross ; the true cross and afflictions are too heavy and painful.

But *God's thoughts are not as ours* : those whom he calls to a kingdom, He calls to sufferings as the way to it. He will have the heirs of Heaven know, that they are not at home on earth, and that *this is not their rest*. He will not have them, with the abused world, fancy a happiness here, and, as St. Augustine says, *Beatam vitam querere in regione mortis*—seek a happy life in the region of death. The reproaches and wrongs that encounter them shall elevate their minds often to that land of peace and rest, *where righteousness dwells*. 2 Pet. iii. 13. The hard taskmaster shall make them weary of Egypt, which otherwise, possibly, they would comply too well with ; shall dispose them for deliverance, and make it welcome, which, it may be, they might but coldly desire, if they were better used.

He knows what He does, who secretly serves His own good purposes by men's evil ones, and, by the *ploughers that make long furrows* on the back of His Church, (Psal. cxxix. 3,) makes it a

fruitful field to Himself. Therefore, it is great folly and unadvisedness, to take up a prejudice against His way, to think it might be better as we would model it, and to complain of the order of things, whereas we should complain of disordered minds: but we had rather have all altered and changed for us, the very course of Providence, than seek the change of our own perverse hearts. But the right temper of a Christian is, to run always cross to the corrupt stream of the world and human iniquity, and to be willingly carried along with the stream of Divine Providence, and not at all to stir a hand, no, nor a thought, to row against that mighty current; and not only is he carried with it upon necessity, because there is no steering against it, but cheerfully and voluntarily; not because he must, but because he would.

And this is the other thing to which Christians are jointly called; as to suffering, so to *calmness of mind* and *patience in suffering*, although their suffering be most unjust: yea, this is truly a part of that duty they are called to, to maintain that integrity and inoffensiveness of life that may make their sufferings at men's hands always unjust. The entire duty here, is innocence and patience; doing willingly no wrong to others, and yet cheerfully suffering wrong when done to themselves. If either of the two be wanting, their suffering does not credit their profession, but dishonors it. If they be patient under deserved suffering, their guiltiness darkens their patience: and if their sufferings be undeserved, yea, and the cause of them honorable, yet impatience under them stains both their sufferings and their cause, and seems in part to justify the very injustice that is used against them; but when innocence and patience meet together in suffering, their sufferings are in their perfect lustre. These are they who honor religion, and shame the enemies of it. It was the concurrence of these two that was the very triumph of the martyrs in times of persecution, that tormented their tormentors, and made them *more than conquerors*, even in sufferings.

Now that we are called both to suffering and to this manner of suffering, the Apostle puts out of question, by the supreme example of our Lord Jesus Christ; for the sum of our calling is, *to follow Him*. Now in both these, in suffering, and in suffering innocently and patiently, the whole history of the Gospel testifies how complete a pattern He is.

Now this is reason enough, and carries it beyond all other reason, why Christians are called to a suffering life, seeing the Lord and Author of that calling, suffered himself so much. *The Captain*, or *Leader, of our salvation*, as the Apostle speaks, was *consecrated by suffering*, Heb. ii. 10: that was the way by which *He entered into the holy place*, where He is now *our everlasting High Priest, making intercession for us*. If He be our Leader to salvation, must not we follow Him in the way He leads, whatsoever

it is? If it be (as we see it is) by the way of sufferings, we must either follow on in that way, or fall short of salvation; for there is no other leader, nor any other way than that which He opened; so that there is not only a congruity in it, that His followers be conformed to Him in suffering, but a necessity, if they will follow Him on, till they attain to glory. And the consideration of both these, cannot but argue a Christian into a resolution for this *via regia*, this royal way of suffering that leads to glory, through which their King and Lord himself went to His glory. It could hardly be believed at first, that this was *His* way, and we can hardly yet believe that it must be ours. *O fools, and slow of heart to believe! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?* Luke xxiv. 25, 26.

Would you be at glory, and will you not follow your Leader in the only way to it? Must there be another way cut out for you by yourself? O absurd! *Shall the servant be greater than his master?* John xiii. 6. Are not you fairly dealt with? If you have a mind to Christ, you shall have full as much of the world's good will as He had: *if it hate you*, He bids you remember, *how it hated Him*. John xv. 18.

But though there were a way to do otherwise, would you not, if the love of Christ possessed your hearts, rather choose to share with Him in His lot, and would you not find delight in the very trouble of it? Is not this conformity to Jesus, the great ambition of all his true hearted followers? *We carry about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus*, says the great Apostle, 2 Cor. iv. 10. Besides the unspeakable advantage to come, which goes linked with this, that *if we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him*, (2 Tim. ii. 12,) there is a glory, even in this present resemblance, that we are conformed to the image of the Son of God in sufferings. Why should we desire to leave Him? Are you not one with him? Can you choose but have the same common friends and enemies? Would you willingly, if it might be, could you find in your heart to be friends with that world which hated your Lord and Master? Would you have nothing but kindness and ease, where He had nothing but enmity and trouble? Or would you not rather, when you think aright of it, refuse and disdain to be so unlike Him? As that good Duke said, when they would have crowned him King of Jerusalem, *No*, said he, *by no means, I will not wear a crown of gold where Jesus was crowned with thorns*.

Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again.

This spotless Lamb of God, was a Lamb both in guiltlessness and silence; and the Prophet Isaiah expresses the resemblance, in that *He was brought as a Lamb to the slaughter*, Isa. liii. 7. He



suffered not only an unjust sentence of death, but withal unjust revilings, *the contradictions of sinners*. No one ever did so little deserve revilings; no one ever could have said so much in his own just defence, and to the just reproach of his enemies; and yet, in both, he preferred silence. No one could ever threaten so heavy things as He could against his enemies, and have made good all he threatened, and yet no such thing was heard from Him. The heavens and the earth, as it were, spoke their resentment of His death who made them; but He was silent; or what He spoke makes this still good, how far he was from revilings and threatenings. As spices pounded, or precious ointment poured out, give their smell most, thus, *His name was an ointment then poured forth*, together with His blood, (Cant. i. 3) and filling heaven and earth with its sweet perfume, was a savor of rest and peace in both, appeasing the wrath of God, and so quieting the consciences of men. And even in this particular was it then most fragrant, in that all the torments of the cross and all the revilings of the multitude, racked him as it were for some answer, yet could draw no other from Him than this, *Father, forgive them for they know not what they do*.

But for those to whom this mercy belonged not, the Apostle tells us what He did; instead of revilings and threatenings, *He committed all to Him who judgeth righteously*. And this is the true method of Christian patience, that which quiets the mind, and keeps it from the boiling, tumultuous thoughts of revenge, to turn the whole matter into God's hand, to resign it over to Him, to prosecute when and as he thinks good. Not as the most, who had rather, if they had power, do for themselves, and be their own avengers; and because they have not power, do offer up such bitter curses and prayers for revenge unto God, as are most hateful to Him, and are far from this calm and holy way of committing matters to His judgment. The common way of referring things to God, is indeed impious and dishonorable to Him, being really no other than calling Him to be a servant and executioner to our passion. We ordinarily mistake His justice, and judge of it according to our own precipitant and distempered minds. If wicked men be not crossed in their designs, and their wickedness evidently crushed, just when we would have it, we are ready to give up the matter as desperate, or at least to abate of those confident and reverential thoughts of Divine justice which we owe Him. Howsoever things go, this ought to be fixed in our hearts, that *He who sitteth in the heaven judgeth righteously*, and executes that His righteous judgment in the fittest season. We poor worms, whose whole life is but a *hand-breadth* in itself, and is *as nothing* unto God, think a few months or years a great matter; but to Him who *inhabiteh eternity, a thousand years are but as one day*, as our Apostle teaches us, in his second Epistle, ch. iii. 8.

Our Saviour in that time of his humiliation and suffering, committed himself and his cause (for that is best expressed, in that nothing is expressed but *He committed*) to *Him who judgeth righteously*, and the issue shall be, that *all his enemies shall become his footstool*, and He himself shall judge them. But that which is given us here to learn from his carriage toward them in his suffering, is, that quietness and moderation of mind, even under unjust sufferings, make us like Him : not to reply to reproach with reproach, as our custom is, to give one ill word for another, or two for one, to be sure not to be behind. Men take a pride in this, and think it ridiculous simplicity so to suffer, and this makes strifes and contention so much abound ; but it is a great mistake. You think it greatness of spirit to bear nothing, to put up with no wrong, whereas indeed it is great weakness, and baseness. It is true greatness of spirit to despise the most of those things which set you usually on fire one against another : especially, being done after a Christian manner, it were a part of the spirit of Christ in you : and is there any spirit greater than that, think you ? Oh ! that there were less of the spirit of the Dragon, and more of the spirit of the Dove amongst us.

Christ the great subject of the writings of the Apostles.

That which is deepest in the heart, is generally most in the mouth ; that which abounds within, runs over most by the tongue or pen. When men light upon the speaking of that subject which possesses their affection, they can hardly be taken off, or drawn from it again. Thus the Apostles in their writings, when they make mention any way of Christ suffering for us, love to dwell on it, as that which they take most delight to speak of ; such delicacy, such sweetness is in it to a spiritual taste, that they like to keep it in their mouth, and are never out of their theme, when they insist on Jesus Christ, though they have but named Him by occasion of some other doctrine ; for He is the great subject of all they have to say.

Our sins the cause of our Saviour's Sufferings.

But senseless we go light under the burden of sin, and feel it not, we complain not of it, and are therefore truly said to be *dead in it* ; otherwise it could not but press us, and press out complaints. *O ! wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me ?* A profane, secure sinner thinks it nothing to break the holy Law of God, to please his flesh, or the world ; he counts sin a light matter, *makes a mock* of it, as Solomon says, Prov. xiv. 9. But a stirring conscience is of another mind : *Mine iniquities are gone over my head ; as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me.* Psal. xxxviii. 4.

Sin is such a burden as makes the very frame of heaven and earth, which is not guilty of it, yea, the whole creation, to crack and groan, (it is the Apostle's doctrine, Rom. viii 22,) and yet, the impenitent heart whose guiltiness it is, continues unmoved, groaneth not; for your accustomed groaning is no such matter.

Yea, to consider it in connexion with the present subject, where we may best read what it is, Sin was a heavy load to Jesus Christ. In Psal. xl. 12, the Psalmist, speaking in the person of Christ, complains heavily, *Innumerable evils have compassed me about; Mine iniquities*, (not His, as done by Him, but yet His, by his undertaking to pay for them,) *have taken hold of me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me.* And surely, that which pressed Him so sore who upholds Heaven and earth, no other in Heaven or on earth could have sustained and surmounted, but would have sunk and perished under it. Was it, think you, the pain of that common outside of his death, though very painful, that drew such a word from him, *My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Or was it the fear of that beforehand, that pressed a *sweat of blood* from him? No, it was this burden of sin, the first of which was committed in the garden of Eden, that then began to be laid upon Him and fastened upon his shoulders in the garden of Gethsemane, ten thousand times heavier than the cross which he was caused to bear. That might be for a while turned over to another, but this could not. This was the cup he trembled at more than at that gall and vinegar to be afterwards offered to him by his crucifiers, or any part of his external sufferings: it was the bitter cup of wrath due to sin, which his Father put into his hand, and caused him to drink, the very same thing that is here called *the bearing our sins in his body*.

And consider, that the very smallest sins contributed to make up this load, and made it so much the heavier: and therefore, though sins be comparatively smaller and greater, yet learn thence to account no sin in itself small, which offends the great God, and which lay heavy upon your great Redeemer in the day of His sufferings.

At His apprehension, besides the soldiers, that invisible crowd of the sins he was to suffer for, came about him, for it was these that laid strongest hold on him: he could easily have shaken off all the rest, as appears, Matt. xxvi. 33, but our sins laid the arrest on him, being accounted His, as it is in that forecited place, Psal. xl. 12, *Mine iniquities*. Now amongst these were even those sins we call small; they were of the number that took him, and they were amongst those instruments of his bloodshed. If the greater were as the spear that pierced his side, the less were as the nails that pierced his hands and his feet, and the very least as the thorns that were set on his precious head. And the multi-



tude of them made up what was wanting in their magnitude ; though they were small, they were many.

Christ crucified, the best kind of learning.

You, then, who are gazing on vanity, be persuaded to turn your eyes this way, and behold this lasting wonder, this Lord of Life dying ! But the most, alas ! want a due eye for this Object. It is the eye of faith alone, that looks aright on Him, and is daily discovering new worlds of excellency and delight in this crucified Saviour ; that can view Him daily, as hanging on the Cross, without the childish, gaudy help of a crucifix, and grow in the knowledge of that Love which passeth knowledge, and rejoice itself in frequent thinking and speaking of Him, instead of those idle and vain thoughts at the best, and empty discourses, wherein they most delight, and wear out the day. What is all knowledge but painted folly in comparison to this ? Hadst thou Solomon's faculty to discourse of all plants, and hadst not the right knowledge of this *root of Jesse* ; wert thou singular in the knowledge of the stars and of the course of the heavens, and couldst walk through the spheres with a *Jacob's staff*, but ignorant of this *star of Jacob* ; if thou knewest the histories of all time, and the life and death of all the most famous princes, and could rehearse them all, but dost not spiritually know and apply to thyself the death of Jesus as thy life ; thou art still a wretched fool, and all thy knowledge with thee shall quickly perish. On the other side, if thy capacity or breeding hath denied thee the knowledge of all these things wherein men glory so much, yet, do but learn *Christ crucified*, and what wouldst thou have more ? That shall make thee happy for ever. *For this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* John xvii. 3.

Here St. Paul takes up his rest, *I determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified.* 1 Cor. ii. 2. As if he had said, Whatsoever I knew besides, I resolved to be as if I knew nothing besides this, the only knowledge wherein I will rejoice myself, and which I will labor to impart to others. I have tried and compared the rest, and find them all unworthy of their room beside this, and my whole soul too little for this. I have passed this judgment and sentence on all. I have adjudged myself to deny all other knowledge, and confined myself within this circle, and I am not straitened. No, there is room enough in it ; it is larger than heaven and earth, *Christ, and him crucified* ; the most despised and ignominious part of knowledge, yet the sweetest and most comfortable part of all : the root whence all our hopes of life, and all our spiritual joys do spring.

But the greatest part of mankind hear this subject as a story. Some are a little moved with the present sound of it, but they

draw it not home into their hearts, to make it theirs, and to find salvation in it, but still cleave to sin, and love sin better than Him who suffered for it.

But you whose hearts the Lord hath deeply humbled under a sense of sin, come to this depth of consolation, and try it, that you may have experience of the sweetness and riches of it. Study this point thoroughly, and you will find it answer all, and quiet your consciences. Apply this *bearing of sin* by the Lord Jesus for you, for it is published and made known to you for this purpose. This is the genuine and true use of it, as of the *brazen serpent*, not that the people might emptily gaze on the fabric of it, but that those that looked on it might be cured. When all that can be said, is said against you, "It is true," may you say, "but it is all satisfied for; He on whom I rest, made it His, and did bear it for me." The person of Christ is of more worth than all men, yea, than all the creatures, and therefore, his life was a full ransom for the greatest offender.

And as for outward troubles and sufferings, which were the occasion of this doctrine in this place, they are all made exceeding light by the removal of this great pressure. Let the Lord lay on me what He will, seeing He hath taken off my sin, and laid that on His own Son in my stead. I may suffer many things, but He hath borne that for me, which alone was able to make me miserable.

And you that have this persuasion, how will your hearts be taken up with his love, *who has so loved you as to give himself for you*; who interposed Himself to bear off from you the stroke of everlasting death, and encountered all the wrath due to us, and went through with that great work, by reason of his unspeakable love! Let him never go forth from my heart, who for my sake refused to go down from the cross.

That we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness.

Many things may lie in a man's way betwixt him and the acting of divers sins which possibly he affects most. Some restraints, either outward or inward, may be upon him, the authority of others, the fear of shame or punishment, or the check of an enlightened conscience; and though by reason of these, he commit not the sin he would, yet he *lives in it*, because he *loves* it, because he would commit it: as we say, the soul lives not so much where it animates, as where it loves. And generally, that metaphorical kind of life, by which man is said to live in any thing, hath its principal seat in the affection: that is the immediate link of the union in such a life; and the untying and death consists chiefly in the disengagement of the heart, the breaking off the affection from it. *Ye that love the Lord*, says the Psalmist, *hate evil*,

Psalm xcvi. 10. An unrenewed mind may have some temporary dislikes even of its beloved sins in cold blood, but it returns to like them within a while. A man may not only have times of cessation from his wonted way of sinning, but, by reason of the society wherein he is, and the withdrawing of occasions to sin, and divers other causes, his very desire after it may seem to himself to be abated, and yet he may be not dead to sin, but only asleep to it; and therefore, when a temptation, backed with opportunity and other inducing circumstances, comes and jogs him, he awakes, and arises, and follows it.

A man may for a while distaste some meat which he loves, (possibly upon a surfeit,) but he quickly regains his liking of it. Every quarrel with sin, every fit of dislike to it, is not that hatred which is implied in dying to sin. Upon the lively representation of the deformity of his sin to his mind, certainly a natural man may fall out with it; but this is but as the little jars of husband and wife, which are far from dissolving the marriage: it is not a fixed hatred, such as amongst the Jews inferred a divorce—*If thou hate her, put her away*; that is to die to it; as by a legal divorce the husband and wife are civilly dead one to another in regard of the tie and use of marriage.

Again; some men's education, and custom, and moral principles, may free them from the grossest kind of sins, yea, a man's temper may be averse from them, but they are alive to their own kind of sins, such as possibly are not so deformed in the common account, covetousness, or pride, or hardness of heart, and either a hatred or a disdain of the ways of holiness which are too strict for them, and exceed their size. Besides, for the good of human society, and for the interest of his own Church and people, God restrains many natural men from the height of wickedness, and gives them moral virtues. There be very many, and very common sins, which more refined natures, it may be, are scarcely tempted to? but as in their diet, and apparel, and other things in their natural life, they have the same kind of being with other persons, though they are more neat and elegant, so, in this living to sin, they live the same life with other ungodly men, though with a little more delicacy.

They consider not that the devils are not in themselves subject to, nor capable of, many of those sins that are accounted grossest amongst men, and yet are greater rebels and enemies to God than men are.

But to be *dead to sin* goes deeper, and extends further than all this; it involves a most inward alienation of heart from sin, and most universal from all sin, an antipathy to the most beloved sin. Not only doth the believer forbear sin, but he hates it—*I hate vain thoughts*, Psalm cxix. 113; and not only doth he hate some sins, but all—*I hate every false way*, ver. 128. A stroke at the



heart does it, which is the certainest and quickest death of any wound. For in this dying to sin, the whole man of necessity dies to it: the mind dies to the device and study of sin, that vein of invention becomes dead; the hand dies to the acting of it; the ear, to the delightful hearing of things profane and sinful; the tongue, to the world's dialect of oaths, and rotten speaking, and calumny, and evil-speaking, which is the commonest effect of the tongue's life in sin,—the very natural heat of sin exerts and vents itself most that way; the eye becomes dead to that intemperate look that Solomon speaks of, when he cautions us against *eyeing the wine when it is red, and well colored in the cup*, Prov. xxiii. 31: it is not taken with looking on the glittering skin of that *serpent* till it bite and sting, as there he adds. It becomes also dead to that unchaste look which kindles fire in the heart, to which Job blindfolded and deadened his eyes, by an express compact and agreement with them: *I have made a covenant with mine eyes*. Job xxxi. 1.

The eye of a godly man is not fixed on the false sparkling of the world's pomp, honor, and wealth; it is dead to them, being quite dazzled with a greater beauty. The grass looks fine in the morning, when it is set with those liquid pearls, the drops of dew that shine upon it; but if you can look but a little while on the body of the sun, and then look down again, the eye is as it were dead; it sees not that faint shining on the earth that it thought so gay before: and as the eye is blinded, and dies to it, so, within a few hours, that gaiety quite vanishes and dies itself.

Men think it strange that the Godly are not fond of their diet, that their appetite is not stirred with desire of their delights and dainties: they know not that such as be Christians indeed, are dead to those things, and the best dishes that are set before a dead man, give him not a stomach. The godly man's *throat is cut to those meats*, as Solomon advises in another subject, Prov. xxiii. 2. But why may not you be a little more sociable to follow the fashion of the world, and take a share with your neighbors, may some say, without so precisely and narrowly examining every thing? It is true, says the Christian, that the time was when I advised as little with conscience as others, but sought myself, and pleaded myself, as they do, and looked no further; but that was when *I was alive to those ways*; but now, truly, *I am dead to them*: and can you look for activity and conversation from a dead man? The pleasures of sin wherein I live, are still the same, but I am not the same. Are you such a sneak and a fool, says the natural man, as to bear affronts, and swallow them, and say nothing? Can you suffer to be so abused by such and such a wrong? Indeed, says the Christian again, I could once have resented an injury, as you or another would, and had somewhat of what you call highheartedness, when I was alive after your fash-

ion ; but now, that humor is not only something cooled, but it is killed in me ; it is cold dead, as ye say ; and a Greater Spirit, I think, than my own, hath taught me another lesson, hath made me both deaf and dumb that way, and hath given me a new vent, and another language, and another Party to speak to on such occasions. *They that seek my hurt*, says David, *speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long*. What doth he in this case ? *But I, as a deaf man, heard not, and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth*. And why ? *For in thee, O Lord, do I hope*. Psal. xxxviii. 12—15. And for this deadness that you despise, I have seen Him who died for me, *who, when he was reviled, reviled not again*.

This is the true character of a Christian ; he is *dead to sin*. But, alas ! where is this Christian to be found ! And yet, thus is every one who truly partakes of Christ ; he is dead to sin really. Hypocrites have an historical kind of death like this, as players in tragedies. Those players have loose bags of blood that receive the wound : so the hypocrite in some externals, and it may be, in that which is as near him as any outward thing, his purse, may suffer some bloodshed of that for Christ. But this death to sin is not a swooning fit, that one may recover out of again : the Apostle, Rom. vi. 4, adds, that the believer *is buried with Christ*.

But this is an unpleasant subject, to talk thus of death and burial. The very name of death, in the softest sense it can have, makes a sour melancholy discourse. It is so indeed, if you take it alone, if there were not, for the life that is lost, a far better one immediately following ; but so it is here ; *living unto righteousness succeeds dying to sin*.

That which makes natural death so affrightful, the *King of terrors*, as Job calls it, ch. xviii. 14, is mainly this faint belief and assurance of the resurrection and glory to come ; and without some lively apprehension of this, all men's moral resolutions and discourses are too weak cordials against this fear. They may set a good face on it, and speak big, and so cover the fear they cannot cure ; but certainly, they are a little ridiculous, who would persuade men to content to die, by reasoning from the necessity and unavoidableness of it, which, taken alone, rather may beget a desperate discontent, than a quiet compliance. The very weakness of that argument is, that it is too strong, *durum telum*. That of company is fantastic : it may please the imagination, but satisfies not the judgment. Nor are the miseries of life, though an argument somewhat more proper, a full persuasive to meet death without reluctance : the oldest, the most decrepit, and most diseased persons, yet naturally fall not out with life, but could have a mind to it still ; and the very truth is this, the worst cottage any one dwells in, he is loath to go out of till he knows of a better. And the reason why that which is so hideous to others, was so

sweet to martyrs, (Heb. xi. 35,) and other godly men who have heartily embraced death, and welcomed it though in very terrible shapes, was, because they had firm assurance of immortality beyond it. The ugly Death's head, when the light of glory shines through the holes of it, is comely and lovely. To look upon Death as Eternity's birth-day, is that which makes it not only tolerable, but amiable. *Hic dies postremus, æterni natalis est*, is the word I admire more than any other that ever dropt from a heathen.

Thus here, the strongest inducement to this Death, is the true notion and contemplation of this Life unto which it transfers us. It is most necessary to represent this, for a natural man hath as great an aversion every whit from this figurative death, this *dying to sin*, as from natural death; and there is the more necessity of persuading him to this, because his consent is necessary to it. No man dies this death to sin, unwillingly, although no man is naturally willing to it. Much of this death consists in a man's consenting thus to die; and this is not only a lawful, but a laudable, yea, a necessary self-murder. *Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth*, says the Apostle, Col. iii. 5. Now no sinner would be content to *die to sin*, if that were all; but if it be passing to a more excellent *life*, then he gaineth, and it were a folly not to seek this death. It was a strange power of Plato's discourse of the soul's immortality, that moved a young man, upon reading it, to throw himself into the sea, that he might leap through it to that immortality: but truly, were this life of God, this *life to righteousness*, and the excellency and delight of it known, it would gain many minds to this death whereby we step into it.

The Sanctification of Christ's disciples the design of His sufferings and death.

Out of some conviction of the consequence of sin, many have a confused desire to be justified, to have sin pardoned, who look no farther: they think not on the importance and necessity of Sanctification, the nature whereof is expressed by this *dying to sin*, and *living to righteousness*.

But here we see that Sanctification is necessary as inseparably connected with Justification, not only as its companion, but as its end, which, in some sort, raises it above the other. We see that it was the thing which God eyed and intended, in taking away the guiltiness of sin, that we might be renewed and sanctified. If we compare them in point of time, looking backward, holiness was always necessary unto happiness, but satisfying for sin, and the pardon of it were made necessary by sin: or, if we look forward, the estate we are appointed to, and for which we are delivered from wrath, is an estate of perfect holiness. When we reflect upon that



great work of redemption, we see it aimed at there, *Redeemed to be holy*, Eph. v. 25, 26 ; Tit. ii. 14. And if we go yet higher, to the very spring, the decree of election, with regard to that it is said, Eph. i. 14. *Chosen before, that we should be holy*. And the end shall suit the design : *Nothing shall enter into the new Jerusalem that is defiled*, or unholy ; nothing but perfect purity is there ; not a spot of sinful pollution, not a *wrinkle* of the old man. For this end was that great work undertaken by the Son of God, that he might frame out of polluted mankind a new and holy generation to his Father, who might compass His throne in the life of glory, and give Him pure praises, and behold His face in that eternity. Now, for this end it was needful, according to the all-wise purpose of the Father, that the guiltiness of sin and sentence of death should be once removed ; and thus, the burden of that lay upon Christ's shoulders on the cross. That done, it is further necessary, that souls so delivered be likewise purified and renewed, for they are designed for perfection of holiness in the end, and it must begin here.

Yet it is not possible to persuade men of this, that Christ had this in his eye and purpose when he was lifted up upon the cross, and looked upon the whole company of those his Father had given him to save, that he would redeem them to be a number of holy persons. We would be redeemed ; who is there that would not ? But Christ would have his redeemed ones holy ; and they who are not true to this His end, but cross and oppose Him in it, may hear of Redemption long, and often but little to their comfort. Are you resolved still to abuse and delude yourselves ? Well, whether you will believe it or not, this is once more told you : there is unspeakable comfort in the death of Christ, but it belongs only to those who *are dead to sin, and alive righteousness*. This circle shuts out the impenitent world ; there it closes, and cannot be broken through ; but all who are penitent, are by their effectual calling lifted into it, translated from that accursed condition wherein they were. So then, if you will live in your sins, you may ; but then, resolve withal to bear them yourselves, for Christ, in his bearing of sin, meant the benefit of none, but such as in due time are thus dead, and thus alive with Him.

#### The Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit.

The particular grace the Apostle recommends, is particularly suitable to his subject in hand, the conjugal duty of wives ; nothing so much adorning their whole carriage as this *meekness and quietness of spirit*. But it is, withal, the comeliness of every Christian in every estate. It is not a woman's garment or ornament, improper for men. There is somewhat (as I may say) of a particular cut or fashion of it for wives towards their husbands, and

in their domestic affairs ; but men, all men ought to wear of the same stuff, yea, if I may so speak, of the same piece, for it is in all one and the same spirit, and fits the stoutest and greatest commanders. Moses was a great general, and yet not less great in this virtue, *the meekest man on earth*.

Nothing is more uncomely in a wife than an uncomposed, turbulent spirit, that is put out of frame with every trifle, and inventive of false causes of disquietness and fretting to itself. And so in a husband, and in all, an unquiet, passionate mind lays itself naked, and discovers its own deformity to all. The greatest part of things that vex us, do so not from their own nature or weight, but from the unsettledness of our minds. *Multa nos offiunt quæ non lædunt* : Many things offend us which do not hurt us. How comely is it to see a composed, firm mind and carriage, that is not lightly moved !

I urge not a stoical stupidity, but that in things which deserve sharp reproof, the mind keep in its own station and seat still, not shaken out of itself, as the most are ; that the tongue utter not unseemly, rash words, nor the hand act anything that discovers the mind hath lost its command for the time. But truly, the most know so ill how to use just anger, upon just cause, that it is easier, and the safer extreme not to be angry, but still calm and serene, as the upper region ; not as the place of continual tempest and storms, as the most are. Let it pass for a kind of sheepishness to be meek ; it is a likeness to Him who *was as a sheep before the shearers, not opening his mouth* ; it is a portion of *His* spirit.

The Apostle commends his exchange of ornaments, by two things. 1. This is incorruptible, and therefore fits an incorruptible soul. Your varieties of jewels and rich apparel are perishing things ; you shall one day see a heap made of all, and that all on a flame. And in reference to yourselves, they perish sooner. When death strips you of your nearest garment, your flesh, all the others, which were but loose upper garments above it, must off too : it gets, indeed, a covering to the grave, but the soul is left stark naked, if no other clothing be provided for it, for the body was but borrowed ; then it is made bare of all. But spiritual ornaments, and this of humility, and meekness amongst them, remain and are incorruptible ; they neither wear out, nor go out of fashion, but are still the better for the wearing, and shall last eternally, and shine there in full lustre.

And, 2. Because the opinion of others is much regarded in matter of apparel, and it is mostly in respect to this that we use ornament in it, he tells us of the account in which this is held : men think it poor and mean, nothing more exposed to contempt than the *spirit of meekness*, it is mere folly with men,—that is no matter ; this overweighs all their disesteem, *It is with God of great price* ; and things are indeed as he values them, and no otherwise. Though it be not the country fashion, yet it is the fashion at

Court, yea, it is the King's own fashion, Matt. xi. 29, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart*. Some who are court-bred, will send for the masters of fashions; though they live not in the Court, and though the peasants think them strange dresses, yet they regard not that, but use them as finest and best. Care not what the world say; you are not to stay long with them. Desire to have both fashions and stuffs from Court, from Heaven, this *spirit of meekness*, and it shall be sent you. It is never right in anything with us, till we attain to this, to tread on the opinion of men, and eye nothing but God's approbation.

Heirs together of the Grace of Life.

Loath will they be to despise one another, who are both bought with the precious blood of one Redeemer, and loath to grieve one another. Being in Him brought into peace with God, they will entertain true peace betwixt themselves, and not suffer anything to disturb it. They have hopes to meet, one day, where is nothing but perfect concord and peace; they will therefore live as heirs of that life here, and make their present estate as like to Heaven as they can, and so, a pledge and evidence of their title to that inheritance of peace which is there laid up for them. And they will not fail to put one another often in mind of those hopes and that inheritance, and mutually to advance and further each other towards it. Where this is not the case, it is to little purpose to speak of other rules. Where neither party aspires to this heirship, live they otherwise as they will, there is one common inheritance abiding them, are inheritance of everlasting flames; and, as they do increase the sin and guiltiness of one another by their irreligious conversation, so that which some of them do wickedly here, upon no great cause, they shall have full cause for doing there; cause to curse the time of their coming together, and that shall be a piece of their exercise for ever. But happy those persons, in any society of marriage or friendship, who converse together as those that shall live eternally together in glory. This indeed is the sum of all duties.

*Life.*] A sweet word, but sweetest of all in this sense! That life above, is indeed alone worthy the name, and this we have here, in comparison, let it not be called life, but a continual dying, an incessant journey towards the grave. If you reckon years, it is but a short moment to him that attains the fullest old age; but reckon miseries and sorrows, it is long to him that dies young. Oh! that this only blessed life were more known, and then it would be more desired.

Conjugal affection necessary *that your prayers be not hindered*

He supposes in Christians the necessary and frequent use of this; takes it for granted, that the heirs of life cannot live with-



out prayer. This is the proper breathing and language of these heirs, none of whom are dumb ; they can all speak. These heirs, if they be alone, they pray alone ; if heirs together, and living together, they pray together. Can the husband and wife have that love, wisdom, and meekness, which may make their life happy, and that blessing which may make their affairs successful, while they neglect God, the only giver of these and all good things ? You think these needless motives, but you cannot think how it would sweeten your converse if it were used : it is prayer that sanctifies, seasons, and blesses all. And it is not enough that they pray when with the family, but even husband and wife together by themselves, and also, with their children ; that they, especially the mother, as being most with them in their childhood, when they begin to be capable, may draw them apart, and offer them to God, and often praying with them, and instructing them in their youth ; for they are pliable while young, as glass is when hot, but after, will sooner break than bend.

But above all, Prayer is necessary as they are heirs of Heaven, often sending up their desires thither. You that are not much in prayer, appear as if you look for no more than what you have here. If you had an inheritance and treasure above, would not your hearts delight to be there ? Thus, the heart of a Christian is in the constant frame of it, but after a special manner Prayer raises the soul above the world, and sets it in Heaven : it is its near access unto God, and dealing with Him, specially about those affairs which concern that inheritance. Now in this lies a great part of the comfort a Christian can have here ; and the Apostle knew this, that he would gain anything at their hands, which he pressed by this argument, that otherwise they would be *hindered in their prayers*. He knew that they who are acquainted with prayer, find such unspeakable sweetness in it, that they will rather do anything than be prejudiced in that.

Now the breach of conjugal love, the jars and contentions of husband and wife, do, out of doubt, so leaven and imbitter their spirits, that they are exceeding unfit for prayer, which is the sweet harmony of the soul in God's ears : and when the soul is so far out of tune as those distempers make it, He cannot but perceive it, whose ear is the most exact of all, for He made and tuned the ear, and is the fountain of harmony. It cuts the sinews and strength of prayer, makes breaches and gaps, as wounds at which the spirits fly out, as the cutting of a vein, by which, as they speak, it bleeds to death. When the soul is calm and composed, it may behold the face of God shining on it. And those who pray together, should not only have hearts in tune within themselves in their own frame, but tuned together ; especially husband and wife, who are one, they should have hearts consorted and sweetly tuned to each other for prayer. So the word is, Matt. xviii. 19.

And it is true, in the general, that all unwary walking in Christians wrongs their communion with Heaven, and casts a damp upon their prayers, so as to clog the wings of it. These two mutually help one another, *prayer* and *holy conversation*: the more exactly we walk, the more fit are we for prayer; and the more we pray, the more are we enabled to walk exactly; and it is a happy life to find the correspondence of these two, *calling on the Lord*, and *departing from iniquity*. 1 Tim. ii. 19. Therefore, that you may pray much, live holily; and, that you may live holily, be much in prayer. Surely such are the heirs of Glory, and this is their way to it.

#### Unanimity of Mind in regard to Religion.

1. It is not a careless indifferency concerning those things. Not to be troubled about them at all, nor to make any judgment concerning them, this is not a loving agreement, arising from oneness of spirit, but a dead stupidity, arguing a total spiritlessness. As the agreement of a number of dead bodies together, which indeed do not strive and contest, that is, they move not at all, because they live not; so that concord in things of religion, which is a not considering them, nor acting of the mind about them, is the fruit and sign either of gross ignorance, or of irreligion. They who are wholly ignorant of spiritual things, are content you determine and impose upon them what you will; as in the dark, there is no difference nor choice of colors, they are all one. But, 2., which is worse, in some this peaceableness about religion arises from an universal unbelief and disaffection; and that sometimes comes of the much search and knowledge of debates and controversies in religion. Men having so many disputes about religion in their heads, and no life of religion in their hearts, fall into a conceit that all is but juggling, and that the easiest way is, to believe nothing; and these agree with any, or rather with none. Sometimes it is from a profane supercilious disdain of all these things; and many there be among these of Gallio's temper, who *care for none of these things*, and who account all questions in religion, as he did, but matter of words and names. And by this all religions may agree together. But that were not a natural union produced by the active heat of the spirit, but a confusion rather, arising from the want of it; not a knitting together, but a freezing together, as cold congregates all bodies, how heterogeneous soever, sticks, stones, and water; but heat makes first a separation of different things, and then unites those that are of the same nature.

And to one or other of these two is reducible much of the common quietness of people's minds about religion. All that implicit Romish agreement which they boast of, what is it, but a

brutish ignorance of spiritual things, authorized and recommended for that very purpose? And amongst the learned of them, there are as many idle differences and disputes as amongst any. It is an easy way, indeed, to agree, if all will put out their eyes, and follow the blind guiding of their judge of controversies. This is their great device for peace, to let the Pope determine all. If all will resolve to be cozened by him, he will agree them all. As if the consciences of men should only find peace by being led by the nose at one man's pleasure! A way the Apostle Paul clearly renounces: *Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy; for by faith ye stand.* 2 Cor. i. 24.

And though we have escaped this, yet much of our common union of minds, I fear, proceeds from no other than the aforementioned causes, want of knowledge, and want of affection to religion. You that boast you live conformably to the appointments of the Church, and that no one hears of your noise, we may thank the ignorance of your minds for that kind of quietness. But the unanimity here required, is another thing; and before I unfold it, I shall premise this,—That although it be very difficult, and it may be impossible, to determine what things are alone fundamental in religion, under the notion of difference, intended by that word, yet it is undoubted, that there be some truths more absolutely necessary, and therefore accordingly more clearly revealed than some others; there are *great things of the Law*, and so of the Gospel. And though no part of Divine truth once fully cleared, ought to be slighted, yet there are things that may be true, and still are but of less importance, and of less evidence than others: and this difference is wisely to be considered by Christians, for the interest of this agreement of minds, here recommended. And concerning it we may safely conclude,

1. That Christians ought to have a clear and unanimous belief of the mysteries and principles of faith; to agree in those without controversy. 2. They ought to be diligent in the research of truth in all things that concern faith and religion: and withal to use all due means for the fullest consent and agreement in them all, that possibly can be attained. 3. Perfect and universal consent in all, after all industry bestowed on it, for any thing we know, is not here attainable, neither betwixt all churches, nor all persons in one and the same church; and therefore, though church-meetings and synods, as the fittest and most effectual way to this unity, should endeavor to bring the church to the fullest agreement that may be, yet they should beware lest the straining it too high in all things, rather break it, and an over diligence in appointing uniformities, remove them further from it. Leaving a latitude and indifferency in things capable of it, is often a stronger preserver of peace and unity. But this by the way. We will rather give some few rules that may be of use to



every particular Christian, toward this common Christian good of Unity of Mind.

1st. Beware of two extremes, which often cause divisions, *captivity to custom*, on the one hand, and *affectation of novelty* on the other.

2dly, Labor for a staid mind, that will not be tossed with every *wind of doctrine*, or appearance of reason, as some who, like vanes, are easily blown to any side with mistakes of the Scriptures, either arising in their own minds, or suggested by others.

3dly, In unclear and doubtful things, be not pertinacious, as the weakest minds are readiest to be upon seeming reason, which, when tried, will possibly fall to nothing; yet they are most assured, and cannot suffer a different thought in any from their own. There is naturally this *Popeness* in every man's mind, and most I say, in the shallowest; a kind of fancied *infallibility* in themselves, which makes them *contentious*, (contrary to the Apostle's rule, Phil. ii. 3, *Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory*,) and as earnest upon differing in the smallest punctilio, as in a high article of faith. Stronger spirits are usually more patient of contradiction, and less violent, especially in doubtful things; and they who see furthally this least peremptory in their determinations. The Apostle in his second Epistle to Timothy, hath a word, *the spirit of a sound mind*: it is a good, sound constitution of mind, not to feel every blast, either of seeming reason to be taken with it, or of cross opinion to be offended at it.

4thly, Join that which is there, *the spirit of love*, in this particular: not at all abating affection for every light difference. And this the most are a little to blame in; whereas the abundance of that should rather fill up the gap of these petty disagreements, that they do not appear, nor be at all sensibly to be found. No more disaffection ought to follow this, than the difference of our faces and complexions, or feature of body, which cannot be found in any two alike in all things.

And these things would be of easier persuasion, if we considered, 1. How supple and flexible a thing human reason is, and therefore not lightly to be trusted to, especially in Divine things; for *here, we know but in part*. 1 Cor. xiii. 9. 2. The small importance of some things that have bred much noise and dissension in the world, as the Apostle speaks of the tongue, *How little a spark, how great a fire will it kindle*; James iii. 5. And a great many of those debates which cost men so much pains and time, are as far from clear decision, as when they began, and are possibly of so little moment, that if they were ended, their prophet would not quit the cost. 3. Consider the strength of Christian charity, which, if it dwelt much in our hearts, would preserve this union of mind amidst very many different thoughts, such as they may be, and would teach us that excellent lesson the Apos-

He gives to this purpose, Phil. iii. 15: *Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.* Let us follow our Lord unanimously, in what He hath clearly manifested to us, and given us with one consent to embrace; as the spheres, notwithstanding each one hath its particular motion, yet all are wheeled about together with the first.

And this leads us to consider the further extent of this word, to agree in heart and in conversation, walking by the rule of those undoubted truths we have received. And in this I shall recommend these two things to you:—

1. In the defence of the Truth, as the Lord shall call us, let us be of one mind, and all as one man. Satan acts by that maxim, and all his followers have it, *Divide and conquer*; and therefore let us hold that counter-maxim, *Union invincible*.

2. In the practice of that Truth, agree as one. Let your conversation be uniform, by being squared to that one rule, and in all spiritual exercises join as one; be *of one heart and mind*. Would not our public worship, think you, prove much more both comfortable and profitable, if our hearts met in it as one, so that we would say of our hearing the word, as he, Acts x. 33, *We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded of God*?—if our prayers ascended up as one pillar of incense to the Throne of grace; if they besieged it, as an army, *stipato agmine Deum obsidentes*, as Tertullian speaks, all surrounding it together to obtain favor for ourselves and the Church? This is much with God, the *consent of hearts* petitioning. *Fama est junctas fortius ire preces*: It is believed that united prayers ascend with greater efficacy. So says our Saviour, Matt. xviii. 20: *Where two or three are gathered*—not their bodies within the same walls only, for so they are but so many carcasses tumbled together, and the promise of His being amongst us, is not made to that, *for He is the God of the living and not of the dead*, Matt. xxii. 32; it is the spirit of darkness that abides amongst the tombs and graves; but—*gathered in my name*, one in that one holy name, written upon their hearts, and uniting them, and so thence expressed in their joint services and invocations. So He says there of them who *agree upon anything they shall ask*, if all their hearts present and hold it up together, if they make one cry or song of it, that harmony of their hearts shall be sweet in the Lord's ears, and shall draw a gracious answer out of His hand: *if ye agree*, your joint petitions shall be as it were an arrest or decree that shall stand in Heaven: *it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven*. But alas! where is our agreement? The greater number of hearts say nothing, and others speak with such wavering and such a jarring harsh noise, being out of tune, earthly, too low set,

that they spoil all, and disappoint the answers. Were the censer filled with those united prayers heaven-wards, it would be filled with fire earth-wards against the enemies of the Church.

And in your private society, seek unanimously your own and each other's spiritual good ; not only agreeing in your affairs and civil converse, but having *one heart and mind* as Christians. To eat and drink together, if you do no more, is such society as beasts may have : to do these in the excess, to eat and drink intemperately together, is a society worse than that of beasts and below them. To discourse together of civil business, is to converse as men ; but the peculiar converse of Christians in that notation, as born again to immortality, an unfading inheritance above, is to further one another towards that, to put one another in mind of Heaven and Heavenly things. And it is strange that men who profess to be Christians, when they meet, either fill one another's ears with lies and profane speeches, or with vanities and trifles, or, at the best, with the affairs of the earth, and not a word of those things that should most possess the heart, and where the mind should be most set, but are ready to reproach and taunt any such thing in others. What ! are you ashamed of Christ and religion ? Why do you profess it then ? Is there such a thing, think ye as the *communing of saints* ? If not, why say you believe it ? It is a truth, think of it as you will. The public ministry will profit little anywhere, where a people or some part of them, are not thus one, and do not live together as of one mind, and use diligently all due means of edifying one another in their holy faith. How much of the primitive Christians' praise and profit is involved in the word, *They were together with one accord, with one mind* : and so they grew ; *the Lord added to the church.* Acts ii. 1, 44, 47.

#### Christian Sympathy.

This makes a Christian rejoice in the welfare and good of another, as if it were his own, and feel their griefs and distresses as if himself were really a sharer in them ; for the word comprehends all feeling together, feeling of joy as well as grief. Heb. xiii. 3 ; 1 Cor. xii. 26. And always, where there is most of grace and of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, there is most of this sympathy. The Apostle St. Paul, as he was eminent in all grace, had a large portion of this. 2 Cor. xi. 29. And if this ought to be in reference to their outward condition, much more in spiritual things there should be rejoicing at the increases and flourishing of grace in others. That base envy which dwells in the hearts of rotten hypocrites, who would have all engrossed to themselves, argues that they move not further than the compass of *self* ; that the pure love of God, and the sincere love of their brethren flowing from it, are not in them. But when the heart can unfeignedly rejoice



in the Lord's bounty to others, and the lustre of grace in others, far outshining their own, truly it is an evidence that what grace such a one hath, is upright and good, and that the law of love is engraven on his heart. And where that is, there will be likewise, on the other side, a compassionate tender sense of the infirmities and frailties of their brethren; whereas some account it a sign of much advancement and spiritual proficiency, to be able to sit in judgment upon the qualifications and actions of others, and to lavish out severe censures round about them: to sentence one weak and of poor abilities, and another proud and lofty, and a third covetous, &c.; and thus to go on in a censor-like magisterial strain. But it were truly an evidence of more grace, not to get upon the bench to judge them, but to sit down rather and mourn for them, when they are manifestly and really faulty, and as for their ordinary infirmities, to consider and bear them. These are the characters we find in the Scriptures, of stronger Christians, Rom. xv. 1; Gal. vi. 1. This holy and humble sympathy argues indeed a strong Christian. *Nil tam spiritualem virum indicat, quam peccati alieni tractatio: Nothing truly shows a spiritual man so much, as the dealing with another man's sin.* Far will he be from the ordinary way of insulting and trampling upon the weak, or using rigor and bitterness, even against some gross falls of a Christian: but will rather vent his compassion in tears, than his passion in fiery railings; will bewail the frailty of man, and our dangerous condition in this life, amidst so many snares and temptations, and such strong and subtle enemies.

As this sympathy works towards particular Christians in their several conditions, so, by the same reason, it acts, and that more eminently, towards the Church, and the public affairs that concern its good. And this, we find, hath breathed forth from the hearts of the saints in former times, in so many pathological complaints and prayers for Zion. Thus David in his saddest times, when he might seem most dispensable to forget other things, and be wholly taken up with lamenting his own fall, yet, even there, he leaves not out the Church, Psal. li. 17. *In thy good pleasure, do good to Zion.* And though his heart was broken all to pieces, yet the very pieces cry no less for the building of Jerusalem's wall, than for the binding up and healing of itself. And in that cxxiid Psalm, which seems to be the expression of his joy on being exalted to the throne and sitting peaceably on it, yet he still thus prays *for the peace of Jerusalem.* And the penman of the cxxxviiiith Psalm, makes it an execrable oversight to forget Jerusalem, or to remember it coldly or secondarily: no less will serve him than to *prefer it to his chief joy.* Whatsoever else is *top* or *head* of his joy, (as the word is,) Jerusalem's welfare shall be its crown, shall be set above it. And the prophet whoever it was, that wrote that cxiid Psalm, and in it poured out that prayer from *an afflicted soul,*

comforts himself in this, that Zion shall be favored. *My days are like a shadow that declineth, and I am withered like grass*, but it matters not what becomes of me; let me languish and wither away, provided Zion flourish; though I feel nothing but pains and troubles, *yet, Thou wilt arise and shew mercy to Zion*: I am content: that satisfies me.

But where is now this spirit of high sympathy with the Church? Surely, if there were any remains of it in us, it is now a fit time to exert it. If we be not altogether dead, surely we shall be stirred with the voice of those late strokes of God's hand, and be driven to more humble and earnest prayer by it. When will men change their poor, base grumbings about their private concerns, Oh! what shall I do? &c., into strong cries for the Church of God, and the public deliverance of all these kingdoms from the raging sword? But vile selfishness undoes us, the most looking no further. If themselves and theirs might be secured, how many would regard little what became of the rest! As one said, *When I am dead let the world be fired*. But the Christian mind is of a larger sphere, looks not only upon more than itself in present, but even to after times and ages, and can rejoice in the good to come, when itself shall not be here to partake of it: it is more dilated, and liker unto God, and to our Head, Jesus Christ. *The Lord, says the Prophet, (Isa. lxiii. 9) in all his people's affliction, was afflicted himself*. And Jesus Christ accounts the sufferings of His body, the Church, His own: *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Acts ix. 4. The heel was trod upon on earth, and the Head crieth from Heaven, as sensible of it. And this in all our evils, especially our spiritual griefs, is a high point of comfort to us, that our Lord Jesus is not insensible of them. This emboldens us to complain ourselves, and to put in our petitions for help to the throne of Grace through his hand, knowing that when He presents them, He will speak his own sense of our condition, and move for us as it were for Himself, as we have it sweetly expressed, Heb. iv. 15, 16. Now, as it is our comfort, so it is our pattern.

*Love as brethren*] Hence springs this feeling we speak of: love is the cause of union, and union the cause of sympathy, and of that unanimity mentioned before. They who have the same spirit uniting and animating them, cannot but have the same mind and the same feelings. And this spirit is derived from that Head, Christ, in whom Christians *live, and move, and have their being*, their now and excellent being, and so, living in Him, they love Him, and are one in Him: they are *brethren*, as here the word is; their fraternity holds in Him. He is the head of it, *the first born among many brethren*, Rom. viii. 29. Men are brethren in two natural respects, their bodies are of the same earth, and their souls breathed from the same God; but this third fra-

lernity which is founded in Christ, is far more excellent and more firm than the other two; for being one in Him, they have there taken in the other two, inasmuch as in Him is our whole nature: He is the *man Christ Jesus*. But to the advantage, and it is an infinite one of being one in Him, we are united to the Divine nature in Him, *who is God blessed forever*, Rom. ix. 5; and this is the highest, certainly, and the strongest union that can be imagined. Now this is a *great mystery*, indeed, as the Apostle says, Eph. v. 32, speaking of this same point, the union of Christ and his Church, whence their union and communion one with another, who make up that body, the Church, is derived. In Christ every believer is *born of God*, is His son; and so, they are not only brethren, one with another, who are so born, but Christ himself owns them as his brethren; *Both he who sanctifies, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.* Heb. ii. 11.

Sin broke all to pieces, man from God, and men from one another. Christ's work in the world was, *union*. To make up these breaches He came down, and began the union which was his work, in the wonderful union made in his person that was to work it, making God and man one. And as the nature of man was reconciled, so, by what He performed, the persons of men are united to God. Faith makes them one with Christ, and he makes them one with the Father, and hence results this oneness amongst themselves: concentrating and meeting in Jesus Christ, and in the father through Him, they are made one together. And that this was His great work, we may read in His prayer. John xvii., where it is the burden and main strain, the great request He so reiterates, *That they may be one, as we are one*, ver. 11. A high comparison, such as man durst not name, but after Him who so warrants us! And again, ver. 21, *That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us*.

So that certainly, where this exists, it is the ground-work of another kind of friendship and love than the world is acquainted with, or is able to judge of, and hath more worth in one drachm of it, than all the quintessence of civil or natural affection can amount to. The friendships of the world, the best of them, are but tied with chains of glass: but this fraternal love of Christians is a golden chain, both more precious, and more strong and lasting: the others are worthless and brittle.

The Christian owes and pays a general charity and good will to all: but peculiar and intimate friendship he cannot have, except with such as come within the compass of this fraternal love, which, after a special manner, flows from God, and returns to Him, and abides in Him, and shall remain unto eternity.

Where this love is and abounds, it will banish far away all those



disensions and bitternesses, and those frivolous mistakings which are so frequent among most persons. It will teach men wisely and gently to admonish one another, where it is needful; but further than that, it will pass by many offences and failings, it will *cover a multitude of sins*, and will very much sweeten society, making it truly profitable; therefore the Psalmist calls it both *good and pleasant, that brethren dwell together in unity*: it perfumes all, as the precious ointment upon the head of Aaron. Psalm cxxxiii. 2, 3.

But many who are called Christians, are not indeed of this brotherhood, and therefore, no wonder they know not what this love means, but are either of restless, unquiet spirits, *biting and devouring one another*, as the Apostle speaks, or at the best, only civilly smooth and peaceable in their carriage, rather scorers than partakers of this spiritual love and fraternity. These are strangers to Christ, not brought into acquaintance and union with Him, and therefore void of the life of grace, and the fruits of it, whereof this is a chief one. Oh! how few amongst multitudes that throng in as we do here together, are indeed partakers of the *glorious liberty of the sons of God*, or ambitious of that high and happy estate!

#### Christian Courteousness.

The former relates to the afflictions of others, this to our whole carriage with them in any condition. And yet, there is a particular regard to be paid to it in communicating good, in supplying their wants, or comforting them that are distressed; that it be not done, or rather, I may say, undone in doing, with such supercilious roughness, venting itself either in looks or words, or any way, as sours it, and destroys the very being of a benefit, and turns it rather into an injury. And generally, the whole conversation of men is made unpleasant by cynical harshness and disdain.

This Courteousness which the Apostle recommends, is contrary to that evil, not only in the surface and outward behavior: no; religion doth not prescribe, nor is satisfied with such courtesy as goes no deeper than words and gestures, which sometimes is most contrary to that singleness which religion owns. These are the upper garments of malice; saluting him aloud in the morning, whom they are undermining all the day. Or sometimes, though more innocent, yet it may be troublesome, merely by the vain affectation and excess of it. Even this becomes not a wise man, much less a Christian. An overstudy or acting of that, is a token of emptiness, and is below a solid mind. Though Christians know such things, and could out-do the studiers of it, yet they (as it indeed deserves) do despise it. Nor is it that graver and wiser way of external plausible deportment, that answers fully this

word ; it is the outer-half indeed, but the thing is a radical sweetness in the temper of the mind, that spreads itself into a man's words and actions ; and this not merely natural, a gentle, kind disposition, (which is indeed a natural advantage that some have,) but this is spiritual, a new nature descended from heaven, and so, in its original and kind, far excelling the other ; it supplies it where it is not in nature, and doth not only increase it where it is, but elevates it above itself, renews it, and sets a more excellent stamp upon it. Religion is in this mistaken sometimes, in that men think it imprints an unkindly roughness and austerity upon the mind and carriage. It doth indeed bar and banish all vanity and lightness, and all compliance and easy partaking with sin. Religion strains, and quite breaks that point of false and injurious courtesy, to suffer thy brother's soul to run the hazard of perishing, and to share in his guiltiness, by not admonishing him after that seasonable, and prudent, and gentle manner (for that indeed should be studied) which becomes thee as a Christian, and that particular respective manner which becomes thy station. These things rightly qualifying it, it doth no wrong to good manners and the courtesy here enjoined, but is truly a part of it, by due admonitions and reproofs to seek to reclaim a sinner ; for it were the the worst unkindness not to do it. *Thou shalt not hate thy brother, thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy brother, and not suffer sin upon him.* Levit. xix. 17.

But that which is true lovingness of heart and carriage, religion doth not only in no way prejudice, but you see requires it in the rule, and where it is wrought in the heart, works and causes it there : fetches out that crookedness and harshness which are otherwise invincible in some humors : *Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros ; Makes the wolf dwell with the lamb.* This, Christians should study, and belie the prejudices which the world take up against the power of godliness ; they should study to be inwardly so minded, and of such outward behavior, as becomes that Spirit of Grace which dwells in them, endeavoring to gain *those that are without*, by their kind, obliging conversation.

In some copies, it is *Humble* ; and indeed, as this is excellent in itself, and a chief characteristic of a Christian, it agrees well with all those mentioned, and carries along with it this inward and real, not acted, courteousness. Not to insist on it now, it gains at all hands, with God and with men ; receives much grace from God, and kills envy, and commands respect and good will from men.

Those showers of grace that slide off from the lofty mountains, rest on the valleys, and make them fruitful. *He giveth grace to the lowly*, loves to bestow it where there is most room to receive it, and most return of ingenuous and entire praises upon the receipt, and such is the humble heart. And truly, as much humility gains much grace, so it grows by it.

It is one of the world's reproaches against those who go beyond their size in religion, that they are proud and self-conceited. Christians, beware there be nothing in you justifying this. Surely they who have most true grace, are least guilty of this. Common knowledge and gifts may *puff up*, but grace does not.

He whom the Lord loads most with his richest gifts, stoops lowest, as pressed down with the weight of them. *Ille est qui superbire nescit, cui Deus ostendit misericordiam suam*: The free love of God humbles that heart most to which it is most manifested.

And towards men, humility graces all grace and all gifts; it glorifies God, and teaches others so to do. It is *conservatrix virtutum*, the *preserver of graces*. Sometimes it seems to wrong them by hiding them; but indeed, it is their safety. Hezekiah by a vain showing of his jewels and treasures, forfeited them all: *Prodendo perdidit*.

#### Genuine upright Goodness.

It cannot be genuine upright goodness that hath its dependence upon the goodness of others who are about us: as they say of the vain-glorious man, his virtue lieth in the beholder's eye. If thy meekness and charity be such as lieth in the good and mild carriage of others towards thee, in their hands and tongues, thou art not owner of it intrinsically. Such quiet and calm, if none provoke thee, is but an accidental, uncertain cessation of thy turbulent spirit unstirred; but move it, and it exerts itself according to its nature, sending up that mud which lay at the bottom; whereas true grace doth then most manifest what it is, when those things which are most contrary, surround and assault it; it cannot correspond and hold game with injuries and railings; it hath no faculty for that, for *answering evil with evil*. A tongue inured to graciousness, and mild speeches, and blessings, and a heart stored so within, can vent no other, try it and stir it as you will. A Christian acts and speaks, not according to what others are towards him, but according to what he is through the grace and Spirit of God in him; as they say, *Quicquid recipitur, recipitur ad modum recipientis*: The same things are differently received, and work differently, according to the nature and way of that which receives them. A little spark blows up one of a sulphureous temper, and many coals, greater injuries and reproaches, are quenched and lose their force, being thrown at another of a cool spirit, as the original expression is, Prov. xvii. 27.

They who have malice, and bitterness, and cursings within, though these sleep, it may be, yet, awake them with the like, and the provision comes forth *out of the abundance of the heart*: give them an ill word, and they have another, or two for one, in readiness for you. So, where the soul is furnished with spiritual



blessings, their blessings come forth, even in answer to reproaches and indignities. *The mouth of the wise is a tree of life*, says Solomon (Prov. x. 11); it can bear no other fruit, but according to its kind, and the nature of the root. An honest, spiritual heart, pluck at it who will, they can pull no other fruit than such fruit. Love and meekness lodge there, and therefore, who-soever knocks, these make the answer.

Let the world account it a despicable simplicity, seek you still more of that dovelike spirit, the spirit of meekness and blessing. It is a poor glory to vie in railings, to contest in that faculty, or in any kind of vindictive returns of evil: the most abject creatures have abundance of that great spirit, as foolish, poor-spirited persons account it; but *it is the glory of man to pass by a transgression* (Prov. xix. 11), it is the noblest victory. And as we mentioned, the Highest Example, God, is our pattern in love and compassions: we are well warranted to endeavor to be like Him in this. Men esteem much more highly some other virtues which make more show, and trample upon these, love, and compassion, and meekness. But though these violets grow low, and are of a dark colour, yet, they are of a very sweet and diffusive smell, odoriferous graces; and the Lord propounds Himself our example in them, Matt. v. 44—48. *To love them that hate you, and bless them that curse you*, is to be truly *the children of your Father, your Father which is in Heaven*. It is a kind of perfection: v. 48: *Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect. He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good.* Be you like it: howsoever men behave themselves, keep you your course, and let your benign influence, as you can, do good to all. And Jesus Christ sets in himself these things before us, *learn of me*, not to heal the sick, or raise the dead, but *learn, for I am meek and lowly in heart*, Matt. xi. 29. And if you be his followers, this is your way, as the Apostle here addeth, *Hereunto are you called*; and this is the end of it, agreeably to the way, *that you may inherit a blessing*.

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But the other kind—detraction, is more universal amongst all sorts, as being a far easier way of mischief in this kind, and of better conveyance. Railings cry out the matter openly, but detraction works all by surprises and stratagem, and mines under ground, and therefore is much more pernicious. The former are as the *arrows that fly by day*, but this, as the *pestilence that walketh in darkness*, (as these two are mentioned together in Psalm xci. 5, 6,) it spreads and infects secretly and insensibly, is not felt but in the effects of it; and it works either by calumnies altogether forged and untrue, of which malice is inventive, or by the advantage of real faults, of which it is very discerning, and these are stretched and aggravated to the utmost. It is not expressible how deep a wound a tongue sharpened to this work will

give, with a very little word and little noise,—*as a razor*, as it is called in Psal. liii. 2, which with a small touch cuts very deep,—taking things by the worst handle, whereas charity, will try about all ways for a good acceptation and sense of things, and takes all by the best. This pest is still killing some almost in all companies; it *casteth down many wounded*, as it is said of the strange woman, Prov. vii. 26. And they convey it under fair prefacing of commendation; so giving them poison in wine, both that it may pass the better, and penetrate the more. This is a great sin, one which the Lord ranks with the first, when he sets them in order against a man, Psal. i. 20: *Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother.*

Remedy for profane and uncharitable speaking.

If thou art inured to oaths or cursing, in any kind or fashion of it, taking the great *name of God* any ways *in vain*, do not favor thyself in it as a small offence: to excuse it by custom, is to wash thyself with ink: and to plead that thou art long practised in that sin, is to accuse thyself deeper. If thou wouldst indeed be delivered from it, think not that a slight dislike of it (when reproved) will do; but seek for a due knowledge of the majesty of God, and thence a deep reverence of him in thy heart; and that will certainly cure that habituated evil of thy tongue; will quite alter that bias which the custom thou speakest of hath given it; will cast it in a new mould, and teach it a new language; will turn thy regardless abuse of that name, by vain oaths and asseverations, into a holy frequent use of it in prayers and praises. Thou wilt not then dare di-honor that blessed name, which saints and angels bless and adore; but wilt set in with them to bless it.

None that know the weight of that name, will dally with it, and *and lightly lift it up*; (as that word translated *taking in vain*, in the third commandment, signifies:) they that do continue to *lift it up in vain*, as it were, to sport themselves with it, will find the weight of it falling back upon them, and crushing them to pieces.

In like manner, a purified heart will unteach the tongue all filthily impure speeches, and will give it a holy strain: and the spirit of charity and humility will banish that mischievous humor, which sets so deep in the most, of reproaching and disgracing others in any kind either openly or secretly. For it is wicked self-love and pride of heart, whence these do spring, searching and disclosing the failings of others, on which love will rather cast a mantle to hide them.

It is an argument of a candid ingenuous mind, to delight in the good name and commendation of others; to pass by their defects, and take notice of their virtues; and to speak and hear of those

willingly, and not endure either to speak or hear of the other ; for in this indeed you may be little less guilty than the evil speaker, in taking pleasure in it, though you speak it not. And this is a piece of men's natural perverseness, to drink in tales and calumnies ;\* and he that doth this, will readily, from the delight he hath in hearing, slide insensibly into the humor of evil speaking. It is strange how most persons dispense with themselves in this point, and that in scarcely any societies shall we find a hatred of this ill, but rather some tokens of taking pleasure in it ; and until a Christian sets himself to an inward watchfulness over his heart, not suffering in it any thought that is uncharitable, or vain self-esteem, upon the sight of others' frailties, he will still be subject to somewhat of this, in the tongue or ear at least. So, then, as for the evil of guile in the tongue, a sincere heart, *truth in the inward parts*, powerfully redresses it ; therefore it is expressed, Psal. xv. 2, *That speaketh the truth from his heart* ; thence it flows. Seek much after this, to speak nothing with God, nor men, but what is the sense of a single unfeigned heart. O sweet truth ! excellent but rare sincerity ! he that *loves that truth within*, alone can work it there ; seek it of him.

Perseverance and Diligence in doing good.

And upon this will follow (as observed in regard to eschewing evil) a constant track and course of obedience, moving directly contrary to the stream of wickedness about a man, and also against the bent of his own corrupt heart within him ; a serious desire and endeavor to do all the good that is within our calling and reach, but especially that particular good of our calling, that which is *in our hand*, and is peculiarly required of us. For in this some deceive themselves ; they look upon such a condition as they imagine were fit for them, or such as is in their eye when they look upon others, and they think if they were such persons, and had such a place, and such power and opportunities, they would do great matters, and in the mean time they neglect that good to which they are called, and which they have in some measure power and place to do. This is the roving sickly humor of our minds, and speaks their weakness ; as sick persons would still change their bed, or posture, or place of abode, thinking to be better. But a staid mind applies itself to the duties of *its own station*, and seeks to glorify him who set it there, reverencing his wisdom in disposing of it so. And there is certainty of a blessed approbation of this conduct. Be thy station never so low, it is not the high condition, but much fidelity, secures it. *Thou hast been faithful in little*, Luke xix. 17. We must care not only to answer occasions, when they call, but to catch at them, and seek

\* Obtreectatio et livor primis auribus accipiuntur.



them out ; yea, to frame occasions of doing good, whether in the Lord's immediate service, delighting in that, private and public, or in doing good to men, in assisting one with our means, another with our *admonitions*, another with counsel or comfort as we can ; laboring not only to have something of that good which is most contrary to our nature, but even to be *eminent in that*, setting Christian resolution, and both the example and strength of our Lord against all oppositions, and difficulties, and discouragements : *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith*, Heb. xii. 2.

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And if you are persuaded to it, then, 1. Desire light from above, to discover to you what is evil and offensive to God in any kind, and what pleaseth him, what is his will ; (for that is the rule and reason of good in our actions, *that ye may prove what is the good and holy, and acceptable will of God*, Rom. xii. 2 ;) and to discover in yourselves what is most adverse and repugnant to that will. 2. Seek a renewed mind to hate that evil, even such as is the closest and most connatural to you, and to love that good, even that which is most contrary. 3. Seek strength and skill, that by another Spirit than your own, you may *avoid evil and do good*, and resist the incursions and solicitings of evil, the artifices and violences of Satan, who is both a *serpent* and a *lion* ; and seek for power against your own inward corruption, and the fallacies of your own heart. And thus you shall be able for *every good work*, and be kept, in such a measure as suits your present estate, *blamless in spirit, soul, and body, to the coming of Jesus Christ*. 1 Thess. v. 23.

"Oh !" but says the humble Christian, "I am often entangled and plunged in soul-evils, and often frustrated in my thoughts against these evils, and in my aims at the good, which is my task and duty."

And was not this Paul's condition ? May you not complain in his language ? And happy will you be, if you do so with some measure of his feeling ; happy in crying out of *wretchedness* ! Was not this his malady, *When I would do good evil is present with me* ? Rom. vii. 21. But know at once, that though thy duty is this, *to eschew evil and do good*, yet thy salvation is more surely founded than on thine own good. That perfection which answers to justice and the Law, is not required of thee. Thou art to *walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit* ; but in so walking, whether in a low or a high measure, still thy comfort lieth in this, that *there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus*, as the Apostle begins the next chapter (Rom. viii.) after his sad complaints. Again, consider his thoughts in the close of the viith chapter, on perceiving the work of God in himself, and distinguishing that from the corrupt motions of nature, and so finding

at once matter of heavy complaint, and yet of cheerful exultation : *O! wretched man that I am* ; and yet with the same breath, *Thanks to God, through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

So then, mourn with him, and yet rejoice with him, and go on with courage as he did, still *fighting the good fight of faith.* When thou fallest in the mire, be ashamed and humbled, yet return and wash in the *fountain opened*, and return and beg new strength to *walk more surely.* Learn to trust thyself less, and God more, and up and be doing against thy enemies, how tall and mighty soever be the sons of Anak. *Be of good courage*, and the Lord shall be with thee, and *shall strengthen thy heart*, and establish thy goings.

Do not lie down to rest upon lazy conclusions, that it is well enough with thee, because thou art out of the common puddle of profaneness ; but look further, to *cleanse thyself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*, 2 Cor. vii. 1. Do not think thy little is enough, or that thou hast reason to despair of attaining more, but press, *press hard toward the mark and prize of thy high calling*, Phil. iii. 14. Do not think all is lost, because thou art at present foiled. *Novit se sæpe vicisse post sanguinem*, says Seneca : The experienced soldier knows that he hath often won the day after a fall, or a wound received ; and be assured, that after the short combats of a moment, follows an eternity of triumph.

#### The Righteous and Evil-doers.

These two words are often used in the Scriptures, and particularly in the book of Psalms, to express the godly and the wicked ; and so this righteousness is not absolute perfection or sinlessness, nor is the opposed evil every act of sin or breach of God's law ; but the righteous be they that are students of obedience and holiness, that desire to walk as in the sight of God, and to *walk with God*, as Enoch did ; that are glad when they can any way serve him, and grieved when they offend him ; that feel and bewail their unrighteousness, and are earnestly breathing and advancing forward ; have a sincere and unfeigned love to all the commandments of God, and diligently endeavor to observe them : that vehemently hate what most pleases their corrupt nature, and love the command that crosses it most ; this is an imperfect kind of perfection. See Phil. iii. 12, 15.

On the other side, evil-doers are they that commit sin *with greediness* ; that walk in it, make it their way ; that live in sin as their element, *taking pleasure in unrighteousness*, as the Apostle speaks, 2 Thess. xi. 12 ; their great faculty, their great delight lies in sin ; they are skilful and cheerful evil-doers. Not any one man in all kinds of sins ; that is impossible ; there is a concatena-

tion of sin, and one disposes and induces to another ; but yet one ungodly man is commonly more versed in and delighted with some one kind of sin, another with some other. He forbears none because it is evil and hateful to God, but as he cannot travel over the whole globe of wickedness, and go the full circuit, he walks up and down in his accustomed way of sin. No one mechanic is good at all trades, nor is any man expert in all arts ; but he is an evil-doer that follows the particular trade of the sin he hath chosen, is active and diligent in that, and finds it sweet. In a word, this opposition lieth mainly in the bent of the affection, or in the way it is set. The godly man hates the evil he possibly by temptation hath been drawn to do, and loves the good he is frustrated of, and, having intended, hath not attained to do. The sinner who hath his denomination from sin as his course, hates the good which he is sometimes forced to do, and loves that sin which many times he does not, either wanting occasion and means, so that he cannot do it, or through the check of an enlightened conscience, possibly dares not do ; and though so bound up from the act, as a dog in a chain, yet the habit, the natural inclination and desire in him, is still the same, the strength of his affection is carried to sin. So in the weakest godly man, there is that predominant sincerity and desire of holy walking, according to which he is called a righteous person, the Lord is pleased to give him that name, and account him so, being upright in heart, though often failing. There is a righteousness of a higher strain, upon which his salvation hangs ; that is not in him, but upon him ; he is clothed with it : but this other kind, which consists of sincerity, and of true and hearty, though imperfect, obedience, is the righteousness here meant, and opposed to evil-doing.

Prayer should go forth from a holy, broken, humble heart.

Not only do open and gross impieties, disappoint our prayers, but the lodging of any sin in our affection. *If I regard iniquity in my heart*, says the Psalmist (Psal. lxi. 18,) *the Lord will not hear my voice*. The word is, *If I see iniquity* ; if mine eye look pleasantly upon it, His will not look so upon me, nor shall I find his ear so ready and open. He says not, *If I do sin*, but, *If I regard it in my heart*. The heart's entertaining and embracing a sin, though it be a smaller sin, is more than the simple failing into sin. And as the ungodly do for this reason lose all their prayers, a godly man may suffer this way, in some degree, upon some degree of guiltiness. The heart being seduced, it may be, and entangled for a time by some sinful lust, Christians are sure to find a stop in their prayers, that they neither go nor come so quickly and so comfortably as before. Any sinful humor, as



rheums do our voice, binds up the voice of prayer, makes it not so clear and shrill as it was wont; and the accusing guilt of it ascending, shuts up the Lord's ear, that he doth not so readily hear an answer as before. And thus that sweet correspondence is interrupted, which all the delights of the world cannot compensate. If, then, you would have easy and sweet accesses to God in prayer,

1. Seek a holy heart; entertain a constant care and study of holiness; admit no parley with sin; do not so much as hearken to it, if you would be readily heard.

2. Seek a broken heart; the Lord is ever at hand to that, as it is in Psal. xxxiv., whence the Apostle cites the words now under our consideration, *He is nigh to them that are of a contrite spirit*, v. 18, &c.; it is an excellent way to prevail. The breaking of the heart multiplies petitioners; every piece of it hath a voice, and a very strong and very moving voice, that enters his ear, and stirs the bowels and compassion of the Lord towards it.

3. Seek an humble heart. That may present its suit always; the court is constantly there, even within it; the Great King loves to make his abode and residence in it. Isa. lvii. 15. This is the thing that the Lord so delights in and requires; he will not fail to accept of it; it is his choice, Mic. vi. 7, 8, *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord? &c. He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and love mercy?* There is this righteousness, and that as a great part making it up, *to walk humbly with thy God*; in the original, *humble to walk with thy God*; he cannot agree with a proud heart; he hates, resists it; and *two cannot walk together unless they be agreed*, as the prophet speaks, Amos iii. 3. The humble heart only is company for God, hath liberty to walk and converse with Him. *He gives grace to the humble*; he bows his ear, if thou lift not up thy neck: proud beggars he turns away with disdain, and the humblest suitors always speed best with him. *The righteous*, not such in their own eyes, but in His, through his gracious indignation and acceptance. And is there not reason to come humbly before Him,—base worms, to the most holy and most high God?

The eyes of the Lord are upon the Righteous, and his ears open to their Prayer.

What assurance have the godly for that *seeing of good*, these blessings you speak of? This is the answer: *The eyes of the Lord are upon them, and his ears open to their prayer*. If you think him wise enough to know what is good for them, and rich enough to afford it, they are sure of one thing, He loves them; they have His good will; his heart is towards them, and therefore

His eye and His ear. Can they then want any good? If *many days* and outward good things be indeed good for them, they cannot miss of these. He hath given them already much better things than these, and hath yet far better in store for them; and what way soever the world go with them, this itself is happiness enough, that they are in His love, *whose loving kindness is better than life*, Psal. lxxiii. 3. Sweet days have they that live in it. What better days would courtiers wish, than to be still in the eye and favor of the king, to be certain of his good will towards them, and to know of access and of a gracious acceptance of all their suits? Now thus it is with all the servants of the Great King, without prejudice one to another; He is ready to receive their requests, and able and willing to do them all good. Happy estate of a believer! He must not account himself poor and destitute in any condition, for he hath favor at court; he hath the King's eye and his ear; *the eyes of the Lord are upon him, and his ears open to his prayers.*

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This is an unspeakable comfort, when a poor believer is in great perplexity of any kind in his outward or spiritual condition. "Well I see no way; I am blind in this, but there are *eyes upon me*, that see well what is best. The Lord is minding me, and bringing about all to my advantage. *I am poor and needy indeed, but the Lord thinketh on me*, Ps. xl. 17." That turns the balance. Would not a man, though he had nothing, think himself happy, if some great prince was busily thinking how to advance and enrich him? Much more, if a number of kings were upon this thought, and devising together. Yet *these thoughts might perish*, as the Psalmist speaks, Psal. cxlvi. 4. How much more solid happiness is it to have Him, whose power is greatest, and whose thoughts fail not, eyeing thee, and devising thy good, and asking us, as it were, *What shall be done to the man whom the King will honor?*

What suits thou hast, thou mayest speak freely; he will not refuse thee anything that is for thy good.

"O! but I am not *righteous*, and all this is for the righteous only." Yet thou wouldst be such a one. Wouldst thou indeed? then in part thou art: (as he who modestly and wisely changed the name of *wise-men* into *philosophers*, lovers of wisdom,) art thou not righteous? yet, a *lover of righteousness* thou art; then thou art one of the righteous. If still thine own unrighteousness be in thine eye, it may and should be so, to humble thee: but if it should scare thee from coming unto God, and offering thy suits with this persuasion, that *his ear is open*, should it make thee think that his favorable eye is not toward thee, yet there is mercy: creep in under the robe of his Son. Thou art sure *he is Jesus Christ the righteous*, and that the Father's eye is on him with delight, and then it shall be so on thee, being in him. Put thy petitions into his hand, who

is the great Master of Requests; thou canst not doubt that he hath access, and that he hath that ear open to him, which thou thinkest shut to thee.

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See and feel thine own unworthiness as much as thou canst, for thou art never bidden to believe in thyself; no, but that is countermanded as faith's great enemy. But what hath thy unworthiness to say against free promises of grace, which are the basis of thy faith? So then believe, that you may pray; this is David's advice, Psal. lxii. 8, *Trust in him at all times, ye people*, and then, *pour out your hearts before him*. Confide in him as a most faithful and powerful friend, and then you will open your hearts to him.

[1.] Offer not to speak to him without the heart in some measure seasoned and prepossessed with the sense of his greatness and holiness. And there is much in this; considering wisely to whom we speak, *the King, the Lord of glory*, and setting the soul before him, in his presence; and then reflecting on ourselves, and seeing what we are, how wretched, and base, and filthy, and unworthy of such access to so great a Majesty. The want of this *preparing of the heart* to speak in the Lord's ear, by the consideration of God and ourselves, is that which fills the excuse of prayer with much guiltiness; makes the heart careless, and slight and irreverent, and so displeases the Lord, and disappoints ourselves of that comfort in prayer, and those answers of it, of which otherwise we should have more experience. We rush in before him with anything, provided we can tumble out a few words; and do not weigh these things, and compose our hearts with serious thoughts and conceptions of God. The soul that studies and endeavors this most, hath much to do to attain to any right apprehensions of him; (for *how little know we of him!*) yet should we, at least, set ourselves before him as the purest and greatest Spirit; a being infinitely more excellent than our minds or any creature can conceive. This would fill the soul with awe and reverence, and ballast it, so as to make it go more even through the exercise; to consider *the Lord*, as the prophet saw him, *sitting on his throne, and all the hosts of heaven standing by him*, on his right hand and on his left, I Kings xvii. 19, and thyself a defiled sinner coming before him, *velut e palude sãu villis ranuncula*, as a vile frog creeping out of some pool, as St. Bernard expresses it: how would this fill thee with holy fear! Oh! his greatness and our baseness, and Oh! the distance! This is Solomon's advice: *Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God, for God is in heaven and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few*, Eccl. v. 2. This would keep us from our ordinary babblings, that heart-nonsense, which, though the words be sense, yet, through the inattention of the heart, are but as impenitent confused dreams in the Lord's ear; as there it follows, ver. 3.



[2.] When thou addressest thyself to prayer, desire and depend upon the assistance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God; without which thou art not able truly to pray. It is a supernatural work, and therefore the principle of it must be supernatural. He that hath nothing of the Spirit of God, cannot pray at all; he may howl as a beast in his necessity or distress, or may speak words of prayer, as some birds learn the language of men; but pray he cannot. And they that have that Spirit, ought to seek the movings and actual workings of it in them in prayer, as the particular *help of their infirmities*, teaching both what to ask, (a thing which of ourselves we know not,) and then enabling them to ask, breathing forth their desires in such sighs and groans, as are the breath not simply of their own, but of God's Spirit.

[3.] As these two precautions are to be taken before prayer, so, in the exercise of it, you should learn to keep a watchful eye over your own hearts throughout, for every step of the way, that they start not out. And in order to this, strive to keep up a continual remembrance of that presence of God, which in the entry of the work, is to be set before the eye of the soul. And our endeavor ought to be to fix it upon that view, that it turn not aside nor downwards, but from beginning to end keep sight of him, who sees and marks whether we do so or no. They that are most inspective and watchful in this, will still be faulty in it; but certainly the less watchful, the more faulty. And this we ought to do, to be aspiring daily to more stability of mind in prayer, and to be driving out somewhat of that roving and wandering which is so universal an evil, and certainly so grievous, not to those who have it most, but who observe and discover it most and endeavor most against it. A strange thing! that the mind, even the renewed mind should be so ready, not only at other times, but in the exercise of prayer, wherein we peculiarly come so near to God, yet even then to slip out and leave him, and follow some poor vanity or other instead of him! Surely the godly man, when he thinks on this, is exceedingly ashamed of himself, cannot tell what to think of it. *God his exceeding joy*, whom, in his right thoughts, he esteems so much above the world and all things in it, yet to use him thus!—when he is speaking to him, to break off from that, and hold discourse, or change a word with some base thought that steps in, and whispers to him; or, at the best, not to be steadfastly minding the Lord to whom he speaks, and possessed with the regard of His presence, and of his business and errand with Him.

This is no small piece of our misery here. these wanderings are evidence to us, that we are not at home. But though we should be humbled for this, and still be laboring against it, yet should we not be so discouraged, as to be driven from the work. Satan would desire no better than that; it were to help him to his wish. And sometimes a Christian may be driven to think, "What shall

I still do thus, abusing my Lord's name, and the privilege he hath given me? I had better leave off." No, not so by any means. Strive against the miserable evil that is within thee, but cast not away thy happiness. Be doing still. It is a froward childish humor, when anything agrees not to our mind, to throw all away. Thou mayest come off, as Jacob, with *halting* from thy *wrestlings*, and yet obtain *the blessing* for which thou *wrestlest*.

#### Answers to Prayer.

Slothful minds do often neglect the answers of God, even when they are most legible in the grant of the very thing itself that was desired. It may be through a total inadvertence in this kind, through never thinking on things as answers of our requests; or possibly, a continual eager pursuit of more, turns away the mind from considering what it hath upon request obtained; we are still so bent upon what further we would have, that we never think what is already done for us, which is one of the most ordinary causes of ingratitude.

But though it be not in the same thing that we desire that our prayers are answered, yet, when the Lord changes our petitions in his answers, it is always for the better. He regards (according to that known word of St. Augustine, *Si non ad voluntatem, ad utilitatem*) our *will* more than our *will*. We beg deliverance; we are not unanswered, if he give patience and support. Be it under a spiritual trial or temptation, *My grace is sufficient for thee*. And where the Lord doth thus, it is certainly better for the time, than the other would be. Observe here, *His ears are open to the righteous, but his eyes are on them too*. They have not so his ear as to induce him blindly to give them what they ask, whether it be fit or no; but *his eye is on them*, to see and consider their estate, and to know better than themselves what is best, and accordingly to answer. This is no prejudice, but a great privilege, and the happiness of his children, that they have a Father who knows what is fit for them, and *withholds no good* from them. And this commutation and exchange of our requests a Christian observing, may usually find out the particular answer of his prayers: and if sometimes he doth not, then his best way is not to subtilize and amuse himself much in that, but rather to keep on in the exercise, knowing (as the Apostle speaks in another case) this for certain, *that their labor shall not be in vain in the Lord*, 1 Cor. xv. ult.; and as the prophet hath it, Isa. xlv. 19, *He hath not said unto the house of Jacob, seek ye me in vain*.

Only this we should always remember, not to set bounds and limits to the Lord in point of time, not to set him a day, that thou wilt attend so long and no longer. How patiently will some

men bestow long attendance on others, where they expect some very poor good or courtesy at their hands ! Yet we are very brisk and hasty with Him who never delays us but for our good, to ripen those mercies for us which we, as foolish children, would pluck while they are green, and have neither that sweetness and goodness in them which they shall have in his time. All his works are done in their season. Were there nothing to check our impatiences, but his Greatness, and the greatness of those things we ask for, and our own unworthiness, these considerations might curb them, and persuade us how reasonable it is that we should wait. He is a king well worth waiting on ; and there is in the very waiting on Him, an honor and a happiness far above us. And the things we seek are great, forgiveness of sins, evidence of sonship and heirship ; heirship of a kingdom ; and we condemned rebels, born heirs of the bottomless pit ! And shall such as we be in such haste with such a Lord in so great requests ! But further, the attendance which this reason enforces, is sweetened by the consideration of his wisdom and love, that he hath foreseen and chosen the very hour for each mercy fit for us, and will not delay it a moment. Never any yet repented their waiting, but found it fully recompensed with the opportune answer, in such a time as they were then forced to confess was the only best. *I waited patiently*, says the Psalmist, *in waiting I waited*, but it was all well bestowed, *He inclined to me and heard my cry, brought me up*, &c., Psal xl. 1. And then he afterwards falls into admiration of the Lord's method, his *wonderful workings and thoughts to us-ward*. " While I was waiting and saw nothing, thy thoughts were towards and for me, and thou didst then work when thy goodness was most remarkable and wonderful."

When thou art in great affliction, outward or inward, thou thinkest (it may be) He regards thee not. Yea, but He doth. Thou art his gold, he knows the time of refining thee, and of then taking thee out of the furnace ; he is versed and skilful in that work. Thou sayest, " I have cried long for power against sin, and for some evidence of pardon, and find no answer to either ;" yet, leave him not. He never yet cast away any that sought him, and stayed by him, and resolved, whatsoever came of it, to lie at his footstool, and to wait, were it all their lifetime, for a good word or a good look from him. And they choose well who make that their great desire and expectation ; for one of his good words or looks will make them happy for ever : and as He is truth itself, they are sure not to miss of it. *Blessed are all they that wait for him*. And thou that sayest, thou canst not find pardon of sin, and power against it : yet consider, whence are those desires of both, which thou once didst not care for. Why dost thou hate that sin which thou didst love, and art troubled and burdened with the guilt of it, under which thou wentest so easily, and which

thou didst not feel before? Are not these something of His own work? Yes, surely. And know He will not leave it unfinished, nor forsake the work of *His hands*. Psal. cxxxviii. 8. *His eye may be on thee though thou seest Him not, and his ear open to thy cry*, though for the present He speaks not to thee as thou desirest. It is not said, that His children always see and hear him sensibly; but yet, when they do not, He is beholding them and hearing them graciously, and will show himself to them, and answer them seasonably.

#### Duty, Dignity, and Profitableness of Prayer.

1. The *duty*: It is due to the Lord to be worshipped and acknowledged thus, as the fountain of good. How will men crouch and bow one to another upon small requests; and shall He only be neglected by the most, from whom *all have life and breath and all things!* (as the Apostle speaks in his sermon, Acts xvii. 25.) And then,

2. Consider the *dignity* of this, to be admitted into so near converse with the highest majesty. Were there nothing to follow, no answer at all, Prayer pays itself in the excellency of its nature, and the sweetness that the soul finds in it. Poor wretched man, to be admitted into heaven while he is on earth, and there to come and speak his mind freely to the Lord of heaven and earth, as his friend, as his Father! to empty all his complaints into his bosom; when wearied with the follies and miseries of the world, to refresh his soul in his God. Where there is any thing of his love, this is a privilege of the highest sweetness; for for they who love find much delight in discoursing together, and count all hours short, and think the day runs too fast, that is so spent; and they who are much in this exercise, the Lord doth impart *his secrets* much to them. See Psal. xxv. 14.

3. Consider again, it is the most profitable exercise; no lost time, as profane hearts judge it, but only time gained. All blessings attend this work. It is the richest traffic in the world, for it trades with heaven, and brings home what is most precious there. And as holiness disposes to prayer, so prayer befriends holiness, increases it much. Nothing so refines and purifies the soul, as frequent prayer. If the often conversing with wise men doth so teach and advance the soul in wisdom, how much more then will converse with God! This makes the soul despise the things of the world, and in a manner makes it Divine; winds up the soul from the earth, acquainting it with delights that are infinitely sweeter.

The natural heart is full-stuffed with prejudices against the way of holiness, which dissuade and detain it; and therefore the holy Scriptures most fitly dwell much on this point, asserting the



true advantage of it to the soul, and removing those mistakes it has in respect of that way.

#### The Beauty of Holiness.

1. In the life of a godly man, taken together in the whole body and frame of it, there is a grave beauty or comeliness, which oftentimes forces some kind of reverence and respect to it, even in ungodly minds.

2. Though a natural man cannot love them spiritually, as graces of the Spirit of God, (for so only the partakers of them are lovers of them,) yet he may have, and usually hath, a natural liking and esteem of some kind of virtues which are in a Christian, and are not, in their right nature, to be found in any other, though a moralist may have somewhat like them; *meekness*, and *patience*, and *charity*, and *fidelity*, &c.

3. These, and other such like graces, do make a Christian life so inoffensive and calm, that, except where the matter of their God or religion is made the crime, malice itself can scarcely tell where to fasten its teeth or lay hold; it hath nothing to pull by, though it would, yea, oftentimes, for want of work or occasions, it will fall asleep for awhile. Whereas ungodliness and iniquity, sometimes by breaking out into notorious crimes, draws out the sword of civil justice, and where it rises not so high, yet it involves men in frequent contentions and quarrels. Prov. xxiii. 29. How often are the lusts and pride, and covetousness of men, paid with dangers and troubles, and vexation, which, besides what is abiding them hereafter, do even in this present life spring out of them! These, the godly pass free of by their just, and mild, and humble carriage. *Whence so many jars and strifes among the greatest part, but from their unchristian hearts and lives, from their lusts that war in their members*, as St. James says, their self-love and unmortified passions? One will abate nothing of his will, nor the other of his. Thus, where pride and passion meet on both sides, it cannot be but a fire will be kindled; when hard flints strike together, the sparks will fly about: but a soft mild spirit is a great preserver of its own peace, kills the power of contest; as woolpacks, or such like soft matter, most deaden the force of bullets. *A soft answer turns away wrath*, says Solomon, Prov. xv. 1, *beats it off, breaks the bone*, as he says, the very strength of it, as the bones are of the body.

And thus we find it, those who think themselves high-spirited, and will bear least, as they speak, are often, even by that, forced to bow most, or to burst under it; while humility and meekness escape many a burden, and many a blow, always keeping peace within, and often without too.

*Reflection* 1. If this were duly considered, might it not do

somewhat to induce your minds to love the way of religion, for that it would so much abate the turbulency and unquietness that abound in the lives of men, a great part whereof the most do procure by the earthliness and distemper of their own carnal minds, and the disorder in their ways that arises thence?

*Reflection 2.* You whose hearts are set towards God, and your feet entered into His ways, I hope will find no reason for a change, but many reasons to commend and endear those ways to you every day more than the last, and, amongst the rest, even this, that in them you escape many even present mischiefs which you see the ways of the world are full of. And, if you will be careful to ply your rule and study your copy better, you shall find it more so. The more you *follow that which is good*, the more shall you avoid a number of outward evils, which are ordinarily drawn upon men by their own enormities and passions. Keep as close as you can to the genuine, even track of a Christian walk, and labor for a prudent and meek behavior, adorning your holy profession, and this shall adorn you, and sometimes gain *those that are without*, yea, even your enemies shall be constrained to approve it.

It is well known how much the spotless lives and patient sufferings of the primitive Christians did sometimes work upon their beholders, yea, on their persecutors, and persuaded some who would not share with them in their religion, yet to speak and write on their behalf. Seeing, then, that reason and experience do jointly aver it, that the lives of men conversant together have generally a great influence one upon another, (for example is an animated or living rule, and is both the shortest and most powerful way of teaching,)—

[1.] Whosoever of you are in an exemplary or leading place in relation to others, be it many or few, be ye, first, *followers of God*. Set before you the rule of holiness, and withal, the best and highest examples of those who have walked according to it, and then you will be leading in it those who are under you, and they being bent to follow you, in so doing will *follow that which is good*. Lead and draw them on, by admonishing, and counseling, and exhorting; but especially, by walking. Pastors, be *examples* to the flock, or *models*, as our Apostle hath it, 1 Pet. v. 3, that they may be stamped aright, taking the impression of your lives. Sound doctrine alone will not serve. Though the water you give your flocks be pure, yet, if you lay spotted rods before them, it will bring forth spotted lives in them. Either teach not at all, or teach by the rhetoric of your lives. Elders, be such in grave and pious carriage, whatsoever be your years; for young men may be so, and, possibly, gray hairs may have nothing under them but gaddishness and folly many years old, habituated and inveterate ungodliness. Parents and Masters, let your children and servants read in your lives the life and power of godliness, the

Practice of Piety not lying in your windows or corners of your houses, and confined within the clasp of the book bearing that or any such like title, but shining in your lives.

[2.] You that are easily receptive of the impression of example, beware of the stamp of unholiness, and of a carnal, formal course of profession, whereof the examples are most abounding; but, though they be fewer who bear the lively image of God impressed on their hearts and expressed in their actions, yet study these, and be followers of them, as they are of Christ. I know you will espy much irregular and unsanctified carriage in us who are set up for the ministry, and if you look round, you will find the world lying in wickedness; yet if there be any who have any sparks of Divine light in them, converse with those, and follow them.

[3.] And, generally, this I say to all, (for none are so complete but they may espy some imitable and emulable good, even in meaner Christians,) acquaint yourselves with the word, the rule of holiness; and then, with an eye to that, look on one another, and be zealous of progress in the ways of holiness. Choose to converse with such as may excite you and advance you, both by their advice and example. Let not a corrupt generation in which you live, be the worse by you, nor you the worse by it. As far as you necessarily engage in some conversation with those who are unholy, let them not pull you into the mire, but, if you can, help them out. And let not any custom of sin prevailing about you, by being familiarly seen, gain upon you, so as to think it fashionable and comely, yea, or so as not to think it deformed and hateful. Know, that you must row against the stream of wickedness in the world, unless you would be carried with it to the dead sea, or lake of perdition. Take that grave counsel given, Rom. xii. 2: *Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind*; that is, the daily advancement in renovation, purifying and refining every day.

They that will live godly must suffer Persecution.

Think not that any prudence will lead you by all oppositions and malice of an ungodly world. Many winter blasts will meet you in the most inoffensive way of religion, if you keep straight to it. Suffering and war with the world, is a part of the godly man's portion here, which seems hard, but take it altogether, it is sweet: none in their wits will refuse that legacy entire, *In the world ye shall have trouble, but in me ye shall have peace*, John xvi. ult.

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It is a resolved case, *All that will live godly, must suffer persecution*, 2 Tim. iii. 12. It meets a Christian in his entrance to the way of the Kingdom, and goes along all the way. No sooner canst



thou begin to seek the way to Heaven, but the World will seek how to vex and molest thee, and make that way grievous; if no other way, by scoffs and taunts, intended as bitter blasts to destroy the tender blossom or bud of religion, or, as Herod, to kill Christ newly born. You shall no sooner begin to inquire after God, but, twenty to one, they will begin to inquire whether thou art gone mad. But if thou knowest *who it is whom thou hast trusted*, and whom thou lovest, this is a small matter. What though it were deeper and sharper sufferings, yet still, *if you suffer for righteousness, happy are you.*

All the sufferings and distresses of this world are not able to destroy the happiness of a Christian, nor to diminish it; yea, they cannot at all touch it; it is out of their reach. If it were built on worldly enjoyments, then, worldly privations and sufferings might shake it, yea, might undo it: when those rotten props fail, that which rests on them must fall. He that hath set his heart on his riches, a few hours can make him miserable. He that lives on popular applause, it is almost in any body's power to rob him of his happiness; a little slight or disgrace undoes him. Or, whatsoever the soul fixes on of these moving unfixed things, pluck them from it, and it must cry after them, *Ye have taken away my gods.* But the believer's happiness is safe, out of the reach of shot. He may be impoverished, and imprisoned, and tortured, and killed, but this one thing is out of hazard: he cannot be miserable; still, in the midst of all these, he subsists a happy man. If all friends be shut out, yet the visits of the Comforter may be frequent, bringing him glad tidings from Heaven, and communing with him of the love of Christ and solacing him in that. It was a great word for a heathen to say of his false accusers, *Kill me they may, but they cannot hurt me.* How much more confidently may the Christian say so! Banishment he fears not, for his country is above; nor death, for that sends him home into that country.

The believing soul having hold of Jesus Christ, can easily despise the best and the worst of the world, and defy all that is in it; can share with the Apostle in that defiance which he gives, *I am persuaded that neither death nor life shall separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*, Rom. viii. ult. Yea, what though the frame of the world were a dissolving, and falling to pieces! This happiness holds, and is not stirred by it; for it is built upon that Rock of eternity, that stirs not, nor changes at all.

Our main work, truly, if you will believe it, is this; to provide this immovable happiness, which amidst all changes, and losses, and sufferings, may hold firm. You *may be free, choose it rather*—not to stand to the courtesy of anything about you, nor of any man, whether enemy or friend, for the tenure of your happiness.



Lay it higher and surer, and if you be wise, provide such a peace as will remain untouched in the hottest flame, such a light as will shine in the deepest dungeon, and such a life as is safe even in death itself, that life which is *hid with Christ in God*. Col. iii. 3.

But if in other sufferings, even the worst and saddest, the believer is still a happy man, then, more especially in those that are the best kind, sufferings for righteousness. Not only do they not detract from his happiness, but,

They concur and give accession to it; he is happy even so by suffering. As will appear from the following considerations.

[1.] It is the happiness of a Christian, until he attain perfection, to be advancing towards it: to be daily refining from sin, and growing richer and stronger in the graces that make up a Christian, a new creature; to attain a higher degree of patience and meekness, and humility; to have the heart more weaned from the earth and fixed on heaven. Now, as other afflictions of the saints do help them in these, their sufferings for righteousness, the unrighteous and injurious dealings of the world with them, have a particular fitness for this purpose. Those trials that come immediately from God's own hand, seem to bind to a patient and humble compliance, with more authority, and (I may say) necessity; there is no plea, no place for so much as a word, unless it be directly and expressly against the Lord's own dealing; but unjust suffering at the hands of men, requires that respect unto God (without whose hand they cannot move,) that for His sake, and for reverence and love to him, a Christian can go through those with that mild evenness of spirit which overcomes even in suffering.

And there is nothing outward more fit to persuade a man to give up with the world and its friendship, than to feel much of its enmity and malice, and that directly venting itself against religion, making that the very quarrel, which is of all things dearest to a Christian, and in the highest esteem with him.

If the world should caress them, and smile on them, they might be ready to forget their home, or at least to abate in the frequent thoughts and fervent desires of it, and to turn into some familiarity with the world, and favorable thoughts of it, so as to let out somewhat of their hearts after it; and thus, Grace would grow faint by the diversion and calling forth of the spirits: as in summer, in the hottest and fairest weather, it is with the body.

It is an observation confirmed by the experience of all ages, that when the Church flourished most in outward peace and wealth, it abated most of its spiritual lustre, which is its genuine and true beauty, *opibus major, virtutibus minor*; and when it seemed most miserable by persecutions and sufferings, it was most happy in sincerity, and zeal, and vigor of grace. When the moon shines brightest towards the earth, it is dark heavenwards: and, on the contrary, when it appears not, it is nearest the sun, and clear towards heaven.

[2.] Persecuted Christians are happy in acting and evidencing, by those sufferings for God, their love to Him. Love delights in difficulties, and grows in them. The more a Christian suffers for Christ, the more he loves Him, and accounts Him the dearer; and the more he loves him, still the more can he suffer for Him.

[3.] They are happy, as in testifying love to Christ and glorifying Him, so in their conformity with Him, which is love's ambition. Love affects likeness and harmony at any rate. A believer would readily take it as an affront, that the World should be kind to him, that was so harsh and cruel to his beloved Lord and Master. Canst thou expect, or wouldst thou wish, smooth language from that World which reviled thy Jesus, which called him Beelzebub? Couldst thou own and accept friendship at its hands, which buffeted Him, and shed His blood? Or, art thou not, rather, most willing to share with Him, and of St. Paul's mind, *an ambassador in chains; God forbid that I should glory in anything save in the cross of Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.* Gal. vi. 14.

[4.] Suffering Christians are happy in the rich supplies of spiritual comfort and joy, which in those times of suffering are usual; so that as *their sufferings for Christ do abound, their consolations in him abound much more*, as the Apostle testifies, 2 Cor. i. 5. God is speaking most peace to the soul, when the world speaks most war and enmity against it; and this compensates abundantly. When the Christian lays the greatest sufferings men can inflict in the one balance, and the least glances of God's countenance in the other, he says, it is worth all the enduring of those to enjoy this: he says with David, Psal. cix. 28. *Let them curse, but bless Thou: let them frown, but smile Thou.* And thus God usually doth: he refreshes such as are prisoners for Him, with visits which they would gladly buy again with the hardest restraints and debarring of nearest friends. The World cannot but misjudge the state of suffering Christians; it sees, as St. Bernard speaks, their crosses, but not their anointings: *vident cruces nostras, unctiones non vident.* Was not Stephen, think you, in a happy posture even in his enemies' hands? Was he afraid of the showers of stones coming about his ears, who saw the heavens opened, and Jesus standing on the Father's right hand, so little troubled with their stoning of him, that, as the text hath it, in the midst of them *he fell asleep*? Acts vii. 60.

[5.] If those sufferings be so small, that they are weighed down even by present comforts, and so the Christian be happy in them in that regard, how much more doth the *weight of glory*, that follows surpass these sufferings! They are *not worthy to come in comparison*, they are as nothing to that *glory that shall be revealed*, in the Apostle's arithmetic; Rom. viii. 18, when I have cast up the sum of the sufferings of this present time, this instant *now*,

they amount to just nothing in respect of that glory. Now, these sufferings are happy, because they are the way to this happiness, and pledges of it, and, if anything can do, they raise the very degree of it. However, it is an *exceeding excellent weight of glory*. The Hebrew word which signifies *glory*, signifies *weight*. Earthly glories are all *too light*, except in the weight of the cares and sorrows that attend them; but that hath the weight of complete blessedness. Speak not of all the sufferings, nor of all the prosperities of this poor life, nor of anything in it, as worthy of a thought, when *that glory* is named; yea, let not this life be called *life*, when we mention that other life, which our Lord, by his death, hath purchased for us.

#### Faith in God.

Faith in God clears the mind, and dispels carnal fears. It is the most sure help: *What time I am afraid*, says David, *I will trust in thee*. Psalm lvi. 3. It resolves the mind concerning the event, and scatters the multitude of perplexing thoughts which arise about that: What shall become of this and that? What if such an enemy prevail? What if the place of our abode grow dangerous, and we be not provided, as others are, for a removal? No matter, says Faith, though all fail, I know of one thing that will not: I have a refuge which all the strength of nature and art cannot break in upon and demolish, *a high defence, my rock in whom I trust*. Psalm lxii. 5, 6. The firm belief of, and resting on His power, and wisdom, and love, gives a clear satisfying answer to all doubts and fears. It suffers us not to stand to jangle with each trifling, grumbling objection, but carries all before it, makes day in the soul, and so chases away those fears that vex us only in the dark, as affrightful fancies do. This is indeed to *sanctify God*, and to give Him his own glory, to *rest on Him*. And it is a fruitful homage which is thus done to Him, returning us so much peace and victory over fears and troubles, in the persuasion that nothing *can separate from His love*; that only we feared, and so, the things that cannot reach that, can be easily despised.

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In all estates, I know of no heart's ease, but to believe; to sanctify and honor thy God, in resting on His word. If thou art not persuaded of this love, surely that will carry thee above all distrustful fears. If thou art not clear in that point, yet depend and resolve to stay by him, yea, to stay on Him, till He show Himself unto thee. Thou hast some fear of him; thou canst not deny it without gross injury to Him and thyself; thou wouldst willingly walk in all well-pleasing unto Him: well then, *who is among you that feareth the Lord, though he see no present light, yet, let him trust*

*in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.* Isa. l. 10. Press this upon thy soul, for there is not such another charm for all its fears and disquiet ; therefore, repeat it still with David, sing this still, till it be stilled, and chide thy distrustful heart into believing : *Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? why art thou disquieted within me ? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him.* Psalm xlii. 5. Though I am all out of tune for the present, never a right string in my soul, yet, He will put forth His hand, and redress all, and *I shall yet once again praise,* and therefore, even now, I will hope.

It is true, some may say, God is a safe shelter and refuge, but He is holy, and holy men may find admittance and protection, but can so vile a sinner as I look to be protected and taken in under His safeguard ? Go try. *Knock at His door, and (take it not on our word, but on his own) it shall be opened to thee ;* that once done, thou shalt have a happy life of it in the worst times. Faith hath this privilege, never to be ashamed ; it takes sanctuary in God, and sits and sings *under the shadow of his wings,* as David speaks. Psalm lxiii. 7.

#### The holy fear of God.

Sanctify Him by fearing Him. *Let Him be your fear and your dread,* not only as to outward, gross offences ; fear an oath, fear to profane the Lord's holy day, but fear also all irregular earthly desires ; fear the distempered affecting of any thing, the entertaining of any thing in the secret of your hearts, that may give distaste to your Beloved. Take heed, respect the Great Person you have in your company, who lodges within you, the Holy Spirit. *Grrieve him not ;* it will turn to your own grief if you do, for all your comfort is in his hand, and flows from Him. If you be but in heart dallying with sin, it will unfit you for suffering outward troubles, and make your spirit low and base in the day of trial ; yea, it will fill you with inward trouble, and disturb that peace which, I am sure, you who know it esteem more than all the peace and flourishing of this world. Outward troubles do not molest or stir inward peace, but an unholy, unsanctified affection doth. All the winds without, cause not an earthquake, but that within its own bowels doth. Christians are much their own enemies in unwary walking ; hereby they deprive themselves of those comforts they might have in God, and so are often almost as perplexed and full of fears, upon small occasions, as worldlings are.

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The word of God cures the many foolish hopes and fears that we are naturally subject to, by representing to us hopes and fears of a far higher nature, which swallow up and drown the other, as inundations and land-floods do the little ditches in those meadows that they overflow. *Fear not,* says our Saviour, *him that can kill*



*the body*—What then? Fear must have some work—He adds, *But fear Him who can kill both soul and body.* Thus, in the passage cited here, *Fear not their fear, but sanctify the Lord, and let Him be your fear and your dread.* And so, as for the hopes of the world, care not though you lose them for God; there is a *hope in you* (as it follows here) that is far above them.

#### The Believer's Hope.

All the estate of a believer lieth in hope, and it is a royal estate. As for outward things, the children of God have what He thinks fit to serve them, but those are not their portion, and therefore He gives often more of the world to those who shall have no more hereafter; but all their flourish and lustre is but a base advantage, as a lackey's gaudy clothes, which usually make more shew than his who is heir of the estate. How often, under a mean outward condition, and very despicable every way, goes an heir of glory *born of God*, and so royal; born to a *crown that fadeth not*, an estate of hopes, but so rich and so certain hopes, that the least thought of them surpasses all the world's possessions! Men think of somewhat for the present, *a bird in hand*, as you say, the best of it; but the odds is in this, that when all present things shall be past and swept away, as if they had not been, then shall these Hoppers be in eternal possession: *they* only shall have all for ever, who seemed to have little or nothing here.

Oh! how much happier, to be the meanest expectant of the glory to come, than the sole possessor of all this world. These expectants are often kept short in earthly things, and, had they the greatest abundance of them, yet they cannot rest in that. Even so, all the spiritual blessings that they do possess here are nothing to *the hope that is in them*, but as an earnest-penny to their great inheritance, which, indeed, confirms their hope, and assures unto them that full estate; and therefore, be it never so small, they may look on it with joy, not so much regarding it simply in itself, as in relation to that which it seals and ascertains the soul of. Be it never so small, yet it is a pledge of the great glory and happiness which we desire to share in.

It is the grand comfort of a Christian, to look often beyond all that he can possess or attain here; and as to answer others, when he is put to it concerning his Hope, so to *answer himself* concerning all his present griefs and wants: I have a poor traveller's lot here, little friendship and many straits, but yet I may go cheerfully homewards, for thither I shall come, and there I have riches and honor enough, a palace and a crown abiding me. Here, nothing but *depth calling upon depth*, one calamity and trouble, as waves, following another: but I have a hope of that *rest that remaineth for the people of God.* I feel the infirmities of a mortal state, but

my hopes of immortality content me under them. I find strong and cruel assaults of temptations breaking in upon me, but, for all that, I have the assured hope of a full victory, and then, of everlasting peace. *I find a law in my members* rebelling against *the law of my mind*, which is the worst of all evils, so much strength of corruption within me; yet, there is withal a hope within me of deliverance and I look over all to that; *I lift up my head, because the day of my redemption draws nigh*. This I dare avow and proclaim to all, and am not ashamed to answer concerning this blessed Hope.

The Reason for the Believer's Hope to be given with Meekness and Fear.

It is to be done with *meekness and fear*; meekness towards men, and reverential fear towards God.

*With meekness.*] A Christian is not, therefore, to be blustering and flying out into invectives, because he hath the better of it, against a man that questions him touching this Hope: as some think themselves certainly authorized to rough speech, because they plead for truth, and are on its side. On the contrary, so much the rather study meekness, for the glory and advantage of the truth. It needs not the service of passion; yea, nothing so deserves it, as passion when set to serve it. *The Spirit of truth* is withal *the Spirit of meekness*. The Dove that rested on that great Champion of truth, who is The Truth itself, is from Him derived to the lovers of truth, and they ought to seek the participation of it. Imprudence makes some kind of Christians lose much of their labor, in speaking for religion, and drive those further off, whom they would draw into it.

*And fear.*] Divine things are never to be spoken of in a light, perfunctory way, but with a reverent, grave temper of spirit: and, for this reason, some choice is to be made both of time and persons. The confidence that attends this hope, makes the believer not fear men, to whom he answers, but still he fears his God, for whom he answers, and whose interest is chief in those things he speaks of. The soul that hath the deepest sense of spiritual things, and the truest knowledge of God, is most afraid to miscarry in speaking of Him, most tender and wary how to acquit itself when engaged to speak of and for God.

An Enlightened Conscience and good Conversation.

That the conscience may be good, it must be enlightened, and it must be watchful, both advising before, and after censuring, according to that light.

The greater part of mankind little regard this: they walk by guess, having perhaps ignorant consciences, and the blind, you

say swallow many a fly. Yea, how many consciences are without sense, *as scared with an hot iron*, 1 Tim. iv. 2; so stupified, that they feel nothing! Others rest satisfied with a civil righteousness, an imagined goodness of conscience, because they are free from gross crimes. Others, who know the rule of Christianity, yet study not a conscientious respect to it in all things: they cast some transient looks upon the rule and their own hearts, it may be, but sit not down to compare them, make it not their business, have time for anything but that, *Non vacant bonæ menti*. They do not, with St. Paul, exercise themselves in this, *to have a conscience void of offence towards God and men*. Acts xxiv. 16. Those were his *Ascetics*, he exhausted himself in striving against what might defile the conscience; or, as the word signifies, *elaborately wrought and dressed* his conscience, Hom. Think you, while other things cannot be done without diligence and intention, that this is a work to be done at random? No, it is the most exact and curious of all works, to have the conscience right, and keep it so; as watches, or other such neat pieces of workmanship, except they be daily wound up and skilfully handled, will quickly go wrong. Yea, besides daily inspection, conscience should, like those, at some times be taken to pieces, and more accurately cleansed, for the best kept will gather soil and dust. Sometimes a Christian should set himself to a more solemn examination of his own heart, beyond his daily search; and all little enough to have so precious a good as this, *a good conscience*. They who are most diligent and vigilant, find nothing to abate as superfluous, but still need of more. The heart is to be *kept with all diligence*, or above all keeping, Prov. iv. 23. Corruption within is ready to grow and gain upon it, if it be never so little neglected, and from without, to invade it and get in. We breathe in a corrupt, infected air, and have need daily to *antidote* the heart against it.

You that are studying to be excellent in this art of a good conscience, go on, seek daily progress in it. The study of conscience is a more sweet, profitable study than that of all science, wherein is much vexation, and, for the most part, little or no fruit. Read this book diligently, and correct your *errata* by that other book, the word of God. Labor to have it pure and right. Other books and works are *curious*, and *by-works*, they shall not appear; but this is one of the books that shall be opened in that great day, *according to which we must be judged*. Rev. xx. 12.

On this follows a good conversation, as inseparably connected with a good conscience. Grace is of a lively, active nature, and doth act like itself. Holiness in the heart, will be holiness in the life too; not some good actions, but a good conversation, an uniform, even tract of life, the whole revolution of it regular. The inequality of some Christian's ways doth breed much discredit to religion, and discomfort to themselves.

Observe here, 1. The order of these two. 2. The principle of both.

1. The order. First, the Conscience good, and then, the Conversation. *Make the tree good and the fruit will be good*, says our Saviour. Matt. xii. 33. So, here, a good conscience is the root of a good conversation. Most men begin at the wrong end of this work. They would reform the outward man first: that will do no good, it will be but dead work.

Do not rest upon external reformatations, they will not hold; there is no abiding, nor any advantage, in such a work. You think, when reprov'd, Oh! I will mend and set about the redress of some outward things. But this is as good as to do nothing. *The mind and conscience being defiled*, as the Apostle speaks, Tit. i. 15, doth defile all the rest: it is a mire in the spring; although the pipes are cleansed, they will grow quickly foul again. If Christians in their progress in grace, would eye this most, that the conscience be growing purer, the heart more spiritual, the affections more regular and heavenly, their outward carriage would be holier; whereas the outward work of performing duties, and being much exercised in religion, may, by the neglect of this, be labor in vain, and amend nothing soundly. To set the outward actions right, though with an honest intention, and not so to regard and find out the inward disorder of the heart, whence that in the actions flows, is but to be still putting the index of a clock right with your finger, while it is foul, or out of order within, which is a continual business, and does no good. Oh! but a purified conscience, a soul renewed and refined in its temper and affections, will make things go right without, in all the duties and acts of our callings.

2. The principle of good in both, is Christ: *Your good conversation in Christ*. The conversation is not good, unless in Him; so neither is the conscience.

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If thou wouldst have thy conscience and heart purified and pacified, and have thy life certified, go to Christ for all, make use of Him; as of His blood to wash off thy guiltiness, so of His Spirit to purify and sanctify thee. If thou wouldst have thy heart reserved for God, pure as His temple; if thou wouldst have thy lusts cast out which pollute thee, and findest no power to do it; go to Him, desire Him to scourge out that filthy rabble, that abuse His house and make it a den of thieves. Seek this, as the only way to have thy soul and thy ways righted to *be in Christ*, and then, *walk in Him*. Let thy conversation be in Christ. Study Him, and follow Him: look on His way, on His graces, His obedience, and humility, and meekness, till, by looking on them, they make the very idea of thee new, as the painter doth of a face he would draw to the life. So behold His glory, that thou



mayest be *transformed from glory to glory*. But as it is there added, this must be *by the Spirit of the Lord*. 2 Cor. iii. 18. Do not, therefore, look on Him simply, as an example without thee, but as life within thee. Having *received Him*, walk not only like Him, but *in Him* as the Apostle St. Paul speaks, Col. ii. 6. And as the word is here, *have your conversation*, not only according to Christ, but *in Christ*. *Draw from His fulness grace for grace*. John i. 16.

The advantage of a good Conscience and Conversation.

There is even an external success attends it, in respect of the malicious, ungodly world: *They shall be ashamed that falsely accuse you*. Thus often it is even most evident to men; the victory of innocence, silent innocence, most strongly confuting all calumny, making the ungodly, false accusers hide their heads. Thus without stirring, the integrity of a Christian conquers; as a rock, unremoved, breaks the waters that are dashing against it. And this is not only a lawful but a laudable way of revenge, shaming calumny out of it, and punishing evil-speakers by well-doing; shewing really how false their accusers were. This is the most powerful apology and refutation; as the sophister who would prove there was no motion, was best answered by the philosopher's rising up and walking. And without this good conscience and conversation, we cut ourselves short of other apologies for religion, whatsoever we say for it. One unchristian action will disgrace it more than we can repair by the largest and best framed speeches on its behalf.

Let those, therefore, who have given their names to Christ honor Him, and their holy profession most this way. Speak for Him as occasion requires;—why should we not, provided it be *with meekness and fear*, as our Apostle hath taught?—but let this be the main defence of religion: like suitably to it, and commend it so. Thus all should do who are called Christians; they should adorn that holy profession with holy conversation. But the most are nothing better than spots and blots, some wallowing in the mire, and provoking one another to all uncleanness. Oh! the unchristian life of Christians! an evil to be much lamented, more than all the troubles we sustain! But these, indeed, do thus deny Christ, and declare that they are not His. So many as have any reality of Christ in you, be so much the more holy, the more wicked the rest are. Strive to make it up, and to honor that name which they disgrace. And if they will reproach you, because ye walk not with them, and cast the mire of false reproaches on you, take no notice, but go on your way; it will dry, and easily rub off. Be not troubled with misjudgings; shame them out of it by your blameless and holy carriage, for that will

do most to put lies out of countenance. However, if they continue impudent, the day is at hand, wherein all the enemies of Christ shall be *all clothed over* and covered with shame, and they who have kept a good conscience, and walked in Christ, *shall lift up their faces with joy.*

A good Conscience makes Affliction light.

As the Apostle calls sin, *the sting of death*, so is it of all sufferings, and the sting that strikes deepest into the very soul: no stripes are like those that are secretly given by an accusing conscience. *Surdo verbere cedit. Juv.*

A sad condition it is, to have from thence the greatest anguish, whence the greatest comfort should be expected; to have thickest darkness, whence they should look for the clearest light. Men who have evil consciences, love not to be with them, are not much with themselves: as St. Augustine compares them to such as have shrewd wives, they love not to be much at home. But yet, outward distress sets a man inward, as foul weather drives him home, and there, where he should find comfort, he is met with such accusations as are *like a continual dropping*, as Solomon speaks of a contentious woman, Prov. xix. 3. It is a most wretched state, to live under sufferings or afflictions of any kind, and be a stranger to God; for a man to have God and his conscience against him, that should be his solace in times of distress; being knocked off from the comforts of the world, whereon he rested, and having no provision of spiritual comfort within, nor expectation from above.

But the children of God, in their sufferings, especially in such as are encountered for God, can retire within themselves, and rejoice in the testimony of a good conscience, yea, in the possession of Christ dwelling within them. All the trouble that befalls them, is but of the rattling of hail upon the tiles of the house, to a man who is sitting within a warm room at a rich banquet; and such is a good conscience, a feast, yea, *a continual feast*. The Believer looks on his Christ, and in Him reads his deliverance from condemnation, and that is a strong comfort, a cordial that keeps him from fainting in the greatest distresses. When the conscience gives this testimony, that sin is forgiven, it raises the soul above outward sufferings. Tell the Christian of loss of goods, or liberty, or friends, or life, he answers all with this: Christ is mine, and my sin is pardoned, that is enough for me. What would I not have suffered, to have been delivered from the wrath of God, if any suffering of mine in this world could have done that? Now that is done to my hand, all other sufferings are light; they are *light* and *but for a moment*. One thought of eternity drowns the whole time of the world's duration, which is but as one instant, or twink-

ling of an eye, betwixt eternity before, and eternity after; how much less is any short life, (and a small part of that is spent in sufferings,) yea, what is it, though it were all sufferings without interruption, which yet it is not! When I look forward to the crown, all vanishes, and I think it *less than nothing*. Now, these things the good conscience speaks to the Christian in his sufferings; therefore, certainly, his choice is best, who provides it for his companion against evil and troublous times. If moral integrity went so far, (as truly it did in some men who had much of it,) that they scorned all hard encounters, and esteemed this a sufficient bulwark, a strength impregnable, *Hic murus aheneus esto, nil conscire sibi*, how much more the Christian's good conscience, which alone is truly such!

The sufferings of Christ.

That which the Apostle speaks here, of *His once suffering*, hath its truth; taking in all, *He suffered once*; His whole life was one continued line of suffering, from the manger to the cross. All that lay betwixt was suitable; His estate and entertainment throughout his whole life, agreed well with so mean a beginning, and so reproachful an end, of it. Forced upon a flight, while he could not go, and living till he appeared in public, in a very mean despised condition, as the carpenter's son; and afterwards, his best works paid with envy and revilings, called a *wine-bibber*, and a *caster out of devils by the prince of devils*; his life often laid in wait and sought for. Art thou mean in thy birth and life, despised, misjudged, and reviled, on all hands? Look how it was with Him, who had more right than thou hast, to better entertainment in the world. Thou wilt not deny it was his own; *it was made by Him, and He was in it, and it knew Him not*. Are thy friends harsh to thee? *He came unto His own, and His own received Him not*. Hast thou a mean cottage, or art thou drawn from it and hast no dwelling, and art thou every way poor and ill-accommodated? He was as poor as thou canst be, *and had not where to lay his head*, worse provided than the *birds and foxes*! But then, consider to what a height His sufferings rose in the end, that most remarkable part of them here meant by his *once suffering for sins*. If thou shouldest be cut off by a violent death, or in the prime of thy years, mayst thou not look upon Him as going before thee in both these? And in so ignominious a way! Scourged, buffeted, and spit on, He endured all, *He gave his back to the smiters*, and then, as the same prophet hath it. *He was numbered amongst the transgressors*. Isa. liii. ult. When they had used him with all that shame, they hanged him betwixt two thieves, and they that passed by *wagged their heads*, and darted taunts at Him, as at a mark fixed to the cross: *they scoffed and said, He saved others,*

*himself he cannot save. He endured the cross, and despised the shame, says the Apostle, Heb. xii. 2.*

Thus we see the outside of His sufferings. But the Christian is subject to grievous temptations and sad desertions, which are heavier by far than the sufferings which indeed the Apostle speaks of here. Yet even in these, this same argument of his holds. For our Saviour is not unacquainted with, nor ignorant of, either of those, though still *without sin*. If any of *that* had been in any of His sufferings, it had not furthered, but undone all our comfort in Him. But *tempted* He was; He suffered that way too, and the temptations were terrible as you know. And was there not some strong conflict when he fell down and prayed in the garden, and *sweat drops of blood*? Was there not an awful eclipse, when he cried out on the cross, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me*? So that, even in these, we may apply this comfort, and stay ourselves or our souls on Him, and go to Him as a compassionate High-priest. Heb. iv. 15. *For Christ also suffered.*

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There is, from these sufferings of Christ, such a result of safety and comfort to a Christian, as makes them a most effectual encouragement to suffering, which is this: if *He suffered once*, and that was *for sin*, now that heavy, intolerable suffering for sin is once taken out of the Believer's way, it makes all other sufferings light, exceeding light, as nothing in his account. *He suffered once for sin*, so that to them who lay hold on Him this holds sure, that sin is never to be suffered for in the way of strict justice again, as not by Him, so not by them who are in Him; for *He suffered for sins once*, and it was for *their* sins, every poor believer's. So, now the soul, finding itself rid of that fear, goes cheerfully through all other hazards and sufferings.

Whereas the soul, perplexed about that question, finds no relief in all other enjoyments; all propositions of lower comforts are unsavory and troublesome to it. Tell it of peace and prosperity; say, however the world go, you shall have ease and pleasure, and you shall be honored and esteemed by all; though you could make a man sure of these, yet if his conscience be working and stirred about the matter of his sin, and the wrath of God which is tied close to sin, he will wonder at your impertinency, in that you speak so far from the purpose. Say what you will of these, he still asks, What do you mean by this? Those things answer not to me. Do you think I can find comfort in them, so long as my sin is unpardoned, and there is a sentence of eternal death standing above my head? I feel even an impress of somewhat of that hot indignation; some flashes of it flying and lighting upon the face of my soul, and how can I take pleasure in these things you speak of? And though I should be senseless, and feel nothing of this all my life, yet, how soon shall I have done with it, and the



delights that reach no further. And then to have *everlasting burnings*, and eternity of wrath to enter to ! How can I be satisfied with that estate :—All you offer a man in this posture, is as if you should set dainty fare, and bring music with it, before a man lying almost pressed to death under great weights, and should bid him eat and be merry, but lift not off his pressure ; you do but mock the man and add to his misery. On the contrary, he that hath got but a view of his Christ, and reads his own pardon in Christ's sufferings, can rejoice in this, in the midst of all other sufferings, and look on death without apprehension, yea, with gladness, for the *sting is out*. Christ hath made all pleasant to him by this one thing, that *He suffered once for sins*. Christ hath perfumed the cross and the grave, and made all sweet. The pardoned man finds himself light, skips and leaps, and, *through Christ strengthening him*, he can encounter any trouble. If you think to shut up his spirit within outward sufferings, he is now, as Sampson in his strength, able to carry away on his back the gates with which you would enclose him. Yea, he can submit patiently to the Lord's hand in any correction : Thou hast forgiven my sin, therefore deal with me as thou wilt ; all is well.

\* \* \* \*

Shall any man offer to bear the name of a Christian, who pleases himself in the way of sin, and can delight and sport himself with it, when he considers this, that Christ suffered for sin ? Do not think it, you who still account sin sweet, which He found so bitter, and account that light, which was so heavy to Him, and made His *soul heavy to the death*. You are yet far off from Him. If you were in Him, and one with Him, there would be some harmony of your hearts with His, and some sympathy with those sufferings, as endured by your Lord, your Head, and for you. They who, with a right view, see Him as pierced by their sins, that sight pierces them, and makes them mourn, brings forth tears, beholding the gushing forth of His blood. This makes the real Christian an avowed enemy to sin. Shall I ever be friends with that, says he, which killed my Lord ? No, but I will ever kill it, and do it by applying His death. The true penitent is sworn to be the death of sin : he may be surprised by it, but there is no possibility of reconciliation betwixt them.

Thou that livest kindly and familiarly with sin, and either openly declarest thyself for it, or hast a secret love for it, where canst thou reap any comfort ? Not from these sufferings. To thee, continuing in that posture, it is all one as if Christ had not suffered for sins ; yea, it is worse than if no such thing had been, that there is salvation, and terms of mercy offered unto thee, and yet thou perishest ; that there is *balm in Gilead*, and yet thou art not healed. And if thou hast not comfort from Jesus crucified, I know not whence thou canst have any that will hold out. Look

about thee, tell me what thou seest, either in thy possession or in thy hopes, that thou esteemest most, and layest thy confidence on. Or, to deal more liberally with thee, see what estate thou wouldst choose, hadst thou thy wish ; stretch thy fancy to devise an earthly happiness. These times are full of unquietness ; but give thee a time of the calmest peace, not an air of trouble stirring ; put thee where thou wilt, far off from fear of sword and pestilence, and encompass thee with children, friends, and possessions, and honors, and comfort, and health to enjoy all these ; yet one thing thou must admit in the midst of them all : within a while thou must die, and having no real portion in Christ, but only a deluding dream of it, thou sinkest through that death into another death far more terrible. Of all thou enjoyest, nothing goes along with thee but unpardoned sin, and that delivers thee up to endless sorrow. *Oh that you were wise, and would consider your latter end !* Do not still gaze about you upon trifles, but yet be entreated to take notice of your Saviour, and receive him, that he may be yours. Fasten your belief and your love on Him. Give all your heart to Him, who stuck not to give Himself an offering for your sins.

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This were a happy estate indeed. But what shall they think who have no assurance, they who doubt that Christ is theirs, and that He suffered for their sins ? I know no way but to believe on Him, and then you shall know that He is yours. From this arises the grand mistake of many : they would first know that Christ is theirs, and then would believe : which cannot be, because He becomes ours by believing. It is that which gives title and propriety to Him. He is set before Sinners as a Saviour who hath suffered for sin, that they may look to him and be saved : that they may lay over their souls on him, and then they may be assured he suffered for them.

Say, then, what is it that scares thee from Christ ? This, thou seest, is a poor groundless exception, for He is set before thee as a Saviour to believe on, that so He may be thy Saviour. Why wilt thou not come unto Him ? Why refusest thou to believe ? Art thou a sinner ? Art thou unjust ? Then, He is fit for thy case : He suffered for sins, *the Just for the unjust*. Oh ! but so many and so great sins ! Yea, is that it ! It is true indeed, and good reason thou hast to think so : but *1st*, Consider whether they be excepted in the proclamation of Christ, the pardon that comes in His name : if not, if He make no exception, why wilt thou ? *2dly*, Consider if thou wilt call them greater than this sacrifice, *He suffered*. Take due notice of the greatness and worth, first, of His person, and then, of His sufferings, and thou wilt not dare to say thy sin goes above the value of his suffering, or that thou art too unjust for Him to justify thee. Be as unrighteous as thou

canst be, art thou convinced of it? then, know that Jesus the just is more righteous than thy unrighteousness. And, after all is said that any sinner hath to say, they are yet, without exception, *blessed who trust in Him.* Psalm ii. ult.

Our restoration to nearness to God is by Christ's Sufferings.

This the Apostle hath excellently expressed, Eph. ii. 16. *He hath reconciled us by His cross, having slain the enmity:* He killed the quarrel betwixt God and us, killed it by His death; brings the Parties together, and hath laid a sure foundation of agreement in His own sufferings; appeases His Father's wrath by them, and by the same, appeases the sinner's conscience. All that God hath to say, in point of justice, is answered there; all that the poor humbled sinner hath to say, is answered too. He hath offered up such an atonement as satisfies the Father, so that He is content that sinners should come in and be reconciled. And then, Christ gives notice of this to the soul, to remove all jealousies. It is full of fear: though it would, it dares not approach unto God, apprehending him to be a *consuming fire.* They who have done the offence, are usually the hardest to reconcile, because they are still in doubt of their pardon. But Christ assures the soul of a full and hearty forgiveness, quenching the flaming wrath of God by His blood. No, says Christ, upon my warrant come in; you will now find my Father otherwise than you imagine: He hath declared Himself satisfied at my hands, and is willing to receive you, to be heartily and thoroughly friends; never to hear a word more of the quarrel that was betwixt you; to grant a full oblivion. And if the soul bear back still through distrust, He takes it by the hand, and draws it forward, leads it unto His Father; presents it to Him, and leaves not the matter till it be made a full and sure agreement.

But for this purpose, that the soul may be both able and willing to come unto God, the sufferings of Christ take away that other impediment. As they satisfy the sentence, and thereby remove the guiltiness of sin, so He hath by them purchased a deliverance from the tyrannous *power* of sin, which detains the soul from God, after all the way has been made for its return. And he hath a power of applying His sufferings to the soul's deliverance, in that kind too. He opens the prison doors to them who are led captive; and because the great chain is upon the heart willingly enthralled in sin, He, by His sovereign power, takes off that, frees the heart from the love of sin, and shews what a base slavish condition it is in, by representing, in His effectual way, the goodness of God, His readiness to entertain a returning sinner, and the sweetness and happiness of communion with Him. Thus He powerfully persuades the heart to shake off all, and, without fur-

ther delay, to return unto God, so as to be received into favor and friendship, and to walk in the way of friendship, with God, to give up itself to His obedience, to disdain the vile service of sin, and live suitably to the dignity of fellowship and union with God.

And there is nothing but the power of Christ alone, that is able to effect this, to persuade a sinner to return, to bring home a heart unto God. Common mercies of God, though they have a leading faculty to repentance, (Rom. ii. 4.) yet the rebellious heart will not be led by them. The judgments of God, public or personal, though they ought to drive us to God, yet the heart, unchanged, runs the further from God. Do we not see it by ourselves and other sinners about us? They look not at all towards Him who smites, much less do they return: or if any more serious thoughts of returning arise upon the surprise of an affliction, how soon vanish they, either the stroke abating, or the heart, by time, growing hard and senseless under it! Indeed, when it is renewed and brought in by Christ, then all other things have a sanctified influence, according to their quality, to stir up a Christian to seek after fuller communion, closer walk, and nearer access to God. But leave Christ out, I say, and all other means work not this way: neither the works nor the word of God sounding daily in his ear. *Return, Return.* Let the noise of the rod speak it too, and both join together to make the cry the louder, *ytt the wicked will do wickedly*, Dan. xii. 10; will not hearken to the voice of God, will not see the hand of God lifted up, Isa. xxvi. 11; will not be persuaded to go in and seek peace and reconciliation with God, though declaring Himself provoked to punish, and to behave Himself as an enemy against his own people. How many are there, who, in their own particular, have been very sharply lashed with divers scourges on their bodies, or their families, and yet are never a whit the nearer God for it all, their hearts are proud, and earthly, and vain, as ever! and let him lay on ever so much, they will still be the same. Only a Divine virtue, going forth from Christ lifted up, draws men unto Him; and, being come unto Him, He brings them unto the Father.

#### Resurrection of Christ from the Grave.

The chains of that prison are strong, but He was too strong a prisoner to be held by them; as our Apostle hath it in his sermon, (Acts ii. 24.) that it was *not possible that He should be kept by them*. They thought all was sure when they had rolled to the stone, and sealed it: that then the Grave had indeed shut her mouth upon Him; it appeared a done business to them, and looked as if it were very complete in His enemies' eyes, and very desperate to His friends, His poor disciples and followers. Were they not near the point of giving over, when they said, *This is*



*the third day, &c., and, We thought this had been He that should have delivered Israel?* Luke xxiv. 21. And yet, he was then with them, who was indeed the *deliverer and salvation of Israel*. That rolling of the stone to the grave, was as if they had rolled it towards the East in the night, to stop the rising of the sun the next morning; much further above all their watches and their power was this *Sun of Righteousness* in his rising again. That body which was entombed was united to the spring of life, the Divine Spirit of the Godhead that quickened it.

#### Memory of the Righteous.

There were many great and powerful persons in those days, who overtopped Noah (no doubt) in outward respects; as, in their stature, the proud giants. And they begot children, *mighty men of old, men of renown*, as the text hath it, Gen. vi. 3; and yet, as themselves perished in the flood, so their names are drowned. They had their big thoughts, certainly, that their houses and *their names* should *continue*, as the Psalmist speaks (Psal. xlix. 11), and yet they are sunk in perpetual oblivion; while Noah's name, who walked in humble obedience, you see in these most precious records of God's own Book, still looks fresh, and smells sweet, and hath this honor, that the very age of the world is marked with this name, to be known by it: *In the days of Noah*. That which profane ambitious persons do idolatrously seek after, they are often remarkably disappointed of. They would have their names memorable and famous, yet they rot; they are either buried with them, or remembered with disgrace, rotting above ground, as carcasses uninterred, and so are the more noisome; it being as little credit to them to be mentioned, as for Pilate that his name is in the Confession of Faith. But the name and remembrance of the righteous is still sweet and delightful; as the name of Abraham the father of the faithful, and those of Isaac and Jacob: their names are embalmed indeed, so that they cannot rot, embalmed with God's own name, [*Eternal*] **THAT** name being wrapped about theirs, *the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*.

Thus is Noah here mentioned as preferred of God; and so, in the second Epistle, as *a preacher of righteousness*, and Heb. xi., among those worthies whose honor is, that *they believed*. This is only a name, a small thing, not to be mentioned in comparison of their other privileges, and especially of that venerable life and glory which they are heirs to; and indeed it is a thing they regard very little; yet, this we see, that even this advantage follows them, and flies from the vain and ungodly who haunt and pursue it.

## Patience towards Sinners.

Let us learn to curb and cool our brisk humors towards even stubborn sinners. Be grieved at their sin for that is your duty; but think it not strange, nor fret at it, that they continue to abuse the long-suffering of God, and yet, that He continues ever abused by suffering them. Zeal is good, but as it springs from love, if it be right, so it is requited by love, and carries the impressions of it: of love to God, and so, a complacency in His way, liking it because it is His; and of love to men, so as to be pleased with that waiting for them, in the possibility, at least, of their being reclaimed; knowing that, however, if they return not, yet the Lord will not lose His own at their hands. *Wilt thou, said those two fiery disciples, that we call for fire, as Elias?* Oh! but the spirit of the dove rested on Him who told them, *They knew not what spirit they were of.* Luke ix. 55, *q. d.* You speak of Elias, and you think you are of his spirit in this motion, but you mistake yourselves; this comes from another spirit than you imagine. Instead of looking for such sudden justice without you, look inward, and see whence that is: examine and correct that within you.

When you are tempted to take ill that goodness and patience of God to sinners, consider, 1. Can this be right, to differ from His mind in anything? Is it not our only wisdom and ever safe rule, to think as He thinks, and will as He wills? And I pray you, does He not hate sin more than you do? Is not His interest in punishing it deeper than yours? And if you be zealous for His interest, as you pretend, then be so with Him, and in His way; for starting from that, surely you are wrong. Consider, 2. Did He not wait for thee? What had become of thee, if long-suffering had subverted his purpose of further mercy, of free pardon to thee? And why wilt thou not always allow that to which thou art so much obliged? Wouldst thou have the bridge cut, because thou art so over? Surely thou wilt not own so gross a thought. Therefore, esteem thy God, still the more, as thou seest the more of His long-suffering to sinners; and learn for Him, and with Him, to bear and wait.

## The Obedience of Noah.

For the obedience of Noah, if we should insist on the difficulties, both in this work and in the way of their preservation by it, it would look the clearer, and be found very remarkable. Considering the length of the work, the great pains in providing materials, especially considering the opposition that probably he met with in it from the profane about him, the mightier of them, or, at least the hatred and continual scoffs of all sorts, it required

principles of an invincible resolution to go through with it. What (would they say) means this old dotard to do? Whither this monstrous voyage? And inasmuch as it spoke, as no doubt he told them, their ruin and his safety, this would incense them so much the more. You look far before you, and what! shall we all perish, and you alone escape? But through all, the sovereign command and gracious promise of his God carried him, regarding their scoffs and threats as little in making the Ark, as he did afterwards the noise of the waters about it, when he was sitting safe within it. This his obedience, having indeed so boisterous winds to encounter, had need of a well fastened root, that it might stand and hold out against them all, and so it had. The Apostle St. Paul tells us what the root of it was: *By faith, being warned of God he prepared an Ark.* Heb. xi. 7. And there is no living and lasting obedience but what springs from that root. He believed what the Lord spake of His determined judgment on the ungodly world, and from the belief of that arose that holy fear which is expressly mentioned, Heb. xi. 7, as exciting him to this work; and he believed the word of promise, which the Lord spake concerning his preservation by the Ark: and the belief of these two carried him strongly on to the work, and through it, against all counter-blasts and opposition; overcame both his own doubtings and the mockings of the wicked while he still looked to Him who was the master and contriver of the work.

Till we attain such a fixed view of our God, and such firm persuasion of His truth, and power, and goodness, it will never be right with us; there will be nothing but wavering and unsettledness in our spirits and in our ways. Every little discouragement from within or from without, that meets us, will be likely to turn us over. We shall not walk in an even course, but still be reeling and staggering, till Faith be set wholly upon its own basis, the proper foundation of it: not set betwixt two upon one strong prop, and another that is rotten, partly on God, and partly on creature helps and encouragements, or our own strength. Our only safe and happy way is, in humble obedience, in His own strength to follow His appointments, without standing and questioning the matter, and to resign the conduct of all to His wisdom and love; to put the rudder of our life into His hand, to steer the course of it as seemeth Him good, resting quietly on His word of promise for our safety. Lord, whither thou wilt, and which way thou wilt, be Thou my guide, and it sufficeth.

This absolute following of God, and trusting Him with all, is marked as the true character of faith in Abraham; his going after God away from his country, *not knowing*, nor asking, *whither he went*, secure in his guide. And so, in that other greater point of offering his Son, he silenced all disputes about it, by that mighty conclusion of faith, *accounting that he was able to raise him*

from the dead. Heb. xi. 8, 19. Thus it is said, v. 7, *By faith, Noah prepared the Ark.* He did not argue and question, How shall this be done, and if it were, how shall I get all the kinds of beasts gathered together to put into it, and how shall it be ended, when we are shut in? No, but he believed firmly that it should be finished by him, and he be saved by it; and he was not disappointed.

#### The Smallness of the number of Believers.

*Wherein few, that is, eight persons, were saved by water.*] This great point of the fewness of those who are saved in the other greater salvation, as in this, I shall not now prosecute: only,

1. If so few, then, the inquiry into ourselves, whether we be of these few, should be more diligent, and followed more home, than it is as yet with the most of us. We are wary in our trifles, and only in this easily deceived, yea, our own deceivers in this great point. Is not this folly far beyond what you usually say of some, *Penny wise and pound foolish*; to be wise for a moment and fools for eternity?

2. You who are indeed seeking the way of life, be not discouraged by your fewness. It hath always been so. You see here, how few of the whole world were saved. And is it not better to be of the few in the Ark, than of the multitude in the waters? Let them fret as ordinarily they do, to see so few more diligent for heaven; as no doubt they did in the case of Noah. And this is what galls them, that any should have higher names and surer hopes this way: What! are none but such as you going to heaven? Think you all of us damned? What can we say, but that there is a flood of wrath awaiting many, and certainly, all that are out of the Ark, shall perish in it.

3. This is that main truth that I would leave with you: look on Jesus Christ as the Ark, of whom this was a figure, and believe it, out of Him there is nothing but certain destruction, a deluge of wrath, all the world over, on those who are out of Christ. Oh! it is our life, our only safety, to be in Him. But these things are not believed. Men think they believe them, and do not. Were it believed, that we are under the sentence of eternal death in our natural state, and that there is no escape but by removing out of ourselves unto Christ, Oh, what thronging would there be to Him! Whereas, now, He invites, and calls, and how few are persuaded to come to Him! Noah believed the Lord's word of judgment against the world, believed His promise made to Him, and prepared an Ark. Is it not an high sign of unbelief, that, there being an ark of everlasting salvation ready prepared to our hand, we will not so much as come to it? Will you be persuaded certainly, that the Ark-door stands open? His offers



are free : do but come, and try if He will turn you away. No, He will not : *Him that comes to me, I will in no ways cast out.* John vi. 37. And as there is such acceptance and sure preservation in Him, there is as sure perishing without Him, trust on what you will. Be you of a giant's stature, (as many of them were,) to help you to climb up (as they would surely do when the Flood came on) to the highest mountains and tallest trees, yet, it shall overtake you. Make your best of your worldly advantages, or good parts, or civil righteousness, all shall prove poor shifts from the flood of wrath, which rises above all these, and drowns them. Only the Ark of our salvation is safe. Think how gladly they would have been within the Ark, when they found death without it ; and now it was too late ! How would many who now despise Christ, wish to honor Him one day ! Men, so long as they thought to be safe on the earth, would never betake them to the Ark, would think it a prison ; and could men find salvation anywhere else, they would never come to Christ for it : this is, because they know him not. But yet, be it necessity, let that drive thee in ; and then being in Him, thou shalt find reason to love Him for Himself, besides the salvation thou hast in Him.

You who have fled into Him for refuge, wrong him not so far as to question your safety. What though the floods of thy former guiltiness rise high, thine Ark shall still be above them ; and the higher they rise, the higher He shall rise, shall have the more glory in freely justifying and saving thee. Though thou find the remaining power of sin still within thee, yet it shall not sink thine Ark. There was in this Ark, sin, yet they were saved from the Flood. If thou dost believe, that puts thee in Christ, and He will bring thee safe through without splitting or sinking.

As thou art bound to account thyself safe in Him, so to admire that love which set thee there. Noah was a holy man : but whence were both his holiness and his preservation while the world perished, but because *he found favor or free grace*, as the word is, in the eyes of the Lord ? And no doubt, he did much contemplate this, being secure within, when the cries of the rest drowning were about him. Thus think thou : Seeing so few are saved in this blessed Ark wherein I am, in comparison of the multitudes that perish in the deluge, whence is this ? why was I chosen, and so many about me left, why, but because it pleased Him ? But all is straight here. We have neither hearts nor time for ample thoughts of this love, till we be beyond time ; then shall we admire and praise without ceasing, and without wearying.

#### Baptism.

That Baptism hath a power, is clear, in that it is so expressly said, *it doth save us* : what kind of power, is equally clear from

the way it is here expressed ; not by a natural force of the element ; though adapted and sacramentally used, it only can wash away the filth of the body ; its physical efficacy or power reaches no further : but it is in the hand of the Spirit of God, as other sacraments are, and as the word itself is, to purify the conscience, and convey grace and salvation to the soul, by the reference it hath to, and union with, that which it represents. It saves *by the answer of a good conscience unto God*, and it affords that, *by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead*.

Thus, then, we have a true account of the power of this, and so of other sacraments, and a discovery of the error of two extremes : (1.) Of those who ascribe too much to them, as if they wrought by a natural inherent virtue, and carried grace in them inseparably. (2.) Of those who ascribe too little to them, making them only signs and badges of our profession. Signs they are, but more than signs merely representing ; they are means exhibiting, and seals confirming, grace to the faithful. But the working of faith, and the conveying of Christ into the soul, to be received by faith, is not a thing put into them to do of themselves, but still in the Supreme Hand that appointed them : and He indeed both causes the souls of His own to receive these His seals with faith, and make them effectual to confirm that faith which receives them so. They are then, in a word, neither empty signs to them who believe, nor effectual causes of grace to them who believe not.

The mistake, on both sides, arises from the want of duly considering the relative nature of these seals, and that kind of union that is betwixt them and the grace they represent, which is real, though not natural or physical, as they speak, so that, though they do not save all who partake of them, yet they do really and effectually save believers (for whose salvation they are means,) as the other external ordinances of God do. Though they have not that power which is peculiar to the Author of them, yet a power they have, such as befits their nature, and by reason of which they are truly said to sanctify and justify, and so to save, as the Apostle here avers of Baptism.

Now, that which is intended for our help, our carnal minds are ready to turn into a hindrance and disadvantage. The Lord representing invisible things to the eye, and confirming His promises even by visible seals, we are apt from the grossness of our unspiritual hearts, instead of stepping up by that which is earthly, to the Divine spiritual things represented, to stay in the outward element, and go no farther. Therefore, the Apostle, to lead us into the inside of this seal of Baptism, is very clear in designating the effect and fruit of it : *Not* (says he) *the putting away the filth of the flesh* : (and water, if you look no farther, can do no more ;) there is an invisible impurity upon our nature, chiefly on our invisible part, our soul : this washing means the taking away of that

and where it reaches its true effect, it doth so purify the conscience, and makes it good, truly so, in the sight of God, who is the judge of it.

Consider, 1. It is a pitiful thing to see the ignorance of the most, professing Christianity, and partaking of the outward seals of it, yet, not knowing what they mean; not apprehending the spiritual dignity and virtue of them. Blind in the *mysteries of the kingdom*, they are not so much as sensible of that blindness. And being ignorant of the nature of these holy things, they cannot have a due esteem of them, which arises out of the view of their inward worth and efficacy. A confused fancy they have of some good in them, and this rising to the other extreme, to a superstitious confidence in the simple performance and participation of them, as if that carried some inseparable virtue with it, which none could miss of, who are sprinkled with the waters of Baptism, and share in the elements of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper.

And what is the utmost plea of the most for their title to heaven, but that in these relative and external things they are Christians; that they are baptized, hear the word, and admitted to the Lord's Table?—Not considering how many have gone through all these, who yet, daily, are going on in the ways of death, never coming near Jesus Christ, *who is the way, and the truth, and the life*, whom the word, and the seals of it, hold forth to Believers. And they are washed in His blood, and quickened with His life, and made like Him, and co-heirs of glory with Him.

2. Even those who have some clearer notion of the nature and fruit of the seals of grace, yet are in a practical error, in that they look not with due diligence into themselves, inquiring after the efficiency of them in their hearts; do not study the life of Christ, to know more what it is, and then, to search into themselves for the truth and the growth of that life within them. Is it not an unbecoming thing, for a Christian (when he is about to appear before the Lord at his Table, and so looks something more narrowly within) to find as little faith, as little Divine affection, a heart as unmortified to the world, as cold towards Christ, as before his last address to the same Table, after the intervening, possibly, of many months; in which time, had he been careful often to reflect inwards on his heart, and to look back upon that new sealing in his last participation, he might probably have been more conformable? And, truly, as there is much guiltiness cleaves to us in this, so, generally, much more in reference to this other sacrament that is here the Apostle's subject, *Baptism*, which being but once administered, and that in infancy, is very seldom and slightly considered by many, even real Christians. And so we are at a loss in that profit and comfort, that increase of both holiness and faith, which the frequent recollecting of it, after a spiritual manner, would no



doubt advance us to. And not only do we neglect to put ourselves upon the thoughts of it in private, but, in the frequent opportunities of such thoughts in public, we let it pass unregarded, are idle, inconsiderate, and so, truly guilty beholders. And the more frequently we have these opportunities, the less are we touched with them; they become common, and work not, and the slighting of them grows as common with us as the thing. Yea, when the engagement is more special and personal, when parents are to present their infants, to this ordinance, (and then might, and certainly ought to have a more particular and fixed eye upon it, and themselves as being sealed with it, to ask within after the fruit and power of it, and to stir up themselves anew to the actings of faith, and to ambition after newness of life, and, with earnest prayer for their children, to be suitors for themselves, for further evidence of their interest in Christ;) yet possibly, many are not much engaged in these things even at such times, but are more busied to prepare their house for entertaining their friends, than to prepare their hearts for offering up their infant unto God to be sealed, and withal to make a new offer of their own hearts to him, to have renewed on them the inward seal of the covenant of grace, the outward seal whereof they did receive, as it is now to be conferred upon their infant.

Did we often look upon the face of our souls, the beholding of the many spots with which we have defiled them after our washing, might work us to shame and grief, and would drive us by renewed application to wash often in that blood which that water figures, which alone can fetch out the stain of sin; and then, it would put us upon renewed purposes of purity, to walk more carefully, to avoid the pollutions of the world we walk in, and to purge out the pollutions of the hearts that we carry about with us, which defile us more than all the world besides. It would work a holy disdain of sin, often to contemplate ourselves as washed in so precious a laver. Shall I, would the Christian say, considering that I am now cleansed in the precious blood of my Lord Jesus, run again into that puddle out of which He so graciously took me, and made me clean? Let the swine wallow in it: He hath made me of his sheepfold. He hath made me of that excellent order for which all are consecrated by that washing, who partake of it: *He hath washed us in His blood, and made us kings and priests unto God the Father.* Am I of these, and shall I debase myself to the vile pleasures of sin? No, I will think myself too good to serve any sinful lusts: seeing that he hath looked on me, and taken me up, and washed and dignified me, and that I am wholly His, all my study and business shall be, to honor and magnify Him.



## The Answer of a good Conscience.

A good conscience is a waking, speaking conscience, and the conscience that questions itself most, is of all sorts the best ; that which is dumb, therefore, or asleep, and is not active and frequent in self-inquiries, is not a good conscience. The word is judicial, alluding to the *interrogation* used in Law for the trial and executing of processes. And this is the great business of conscience, to sit, and examine, and judge within ; to *hold courts* in the soul. And it is of continual necessity that it be so : there can be no *vacation* of this judicature, without great damage to the estate of the soul : yea, not a day ought to pass without a session of conscience within ; for daily disorders arise in the soul, which, if they pass on, will grow and gather more, and so breed more difficulty in their trial and redress. Yet men do easily turn from this work as hard and unpleasant, and make many a long vacation in the year, and protract it from one day to another. In the morning, they must go about their business, and at night, they are weary and sleepy, and all the day long one affair steps in after another ; and in case of that failing, some trifling company or other ; and so their days pass on, while the soul is overgrown with impurities and disorders.

You know what confusions, and disorders, and evils, will abound amongst a rude people, where there is no kind of court or judicature held. Thus is it with that unruly rabble, the lusts and passions of our souls, when there is no discipline nor judgment within, or where there is but a neglect and intermission of it for a short time. And the most part of souls are in the posture of ruin : their vile affections, as a headstrong, tumultuous multitude, that will not suffer a deputed judge to sit amongst them, cry down their consciences, and make a continual noise, that the voice of it may not be heard, and so, force it to desist and leave them to their own ways.

But you who take this course, know, you are providing the severest judgment for yourselves by this disturbing of judgment, as when a people rise against an inferior judge, the prince or supreme magistrate who sent him, hearing of it, doth not fail to vindicate his honor and justice in their exemplary punishment.

Will you not answer unto conscience, but, when it begins to speak, turn to business or company, that you may not hear it ? Know, that it and you must answer unto God ; and when he shall make inquiry, it must report, and report as the truth is, knowing that there is no hiding the matter from Him ; Lord, there are, to my knowledge, a world of enormities within the circuit I had to judge, and I would have judged them, but was forcibly withstood and interrupted ; and was not strong enough to resist the tumultuous power that rose against me ; now the matter comes into

'Thine own hand to judge it Thyself. What shall the soul say in that day, when conscience shall make such an answer unto God, and it shall come under the severity of His justice for all? Whereas, if it had given way to the conscience to find out, and judge, and rectify matters, so that it could have answered concerning its procedure that way, God would accept this as the answer of a good conscience, and what conscience had done, he would not do over again: It hath judged; then, I acquit, *For if we would judge ourselves* (says the Apostle,) *we should not be judged.* 1 Cor xi. 31.

God requires a pure Heart.

Were it possible to persuade you, I would recommend one thing to you: learn to look on the ordinances of God suitably to their nature, spiritually, and inquire after the spiritual effect and working of them upon your consciences. We would willingly have all religion reduced to externals; this is our natural choice; and we would pay all in this coin, as cheaper and easier by far, and would compound for the spiritual part, rather to add and give more external performance and ceremony. Hence, the natural complacency in Popery, which is all for this service of the flesh and body-services; and to those prescribed by God, will deal so liberally with Him in that kind, as to add more, and frame new devices and rites, what you will in this kind, sprinklings, and washings, and anointings, and incense. But whither tends all this? Is it not a gross mistaking of God, to think Him thus pleased? Or is it not a direct affront, knowing that He is not pleased with these, but desires another thing, to thrust that upon Him which He cares not for, and refuse Him what He calls for? —that single, humble heart-worship and walking with Him, that purity of spirit and conscience which only He prizes; no outward service being acceptable, but for these, as they tend to this end and do attain it. Give me, saith He, nothing, if you give not this. Oh! saith the carnal mind, anything but this Thou shalt have: as many washings and offerings as Thou wilt, *thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil*; yea, rather than fail, *let the fruit of my body go for the sin of my soul*, Mic. vi. 6. Thus we: will the outward use of the word and sacraments do it? then, all shall be well. Baptized we are; and shall I hear much and communicate often, if I can reach it? Shall I be exact in point of family-worship? Shall I pray in secret? All this I do, or at least I now promise. Aye, but when all that is done, there is yet one thing may be wanting, and if it be so, all that amounts to nothing. Is thy conscience purified and made good by all these; or art thou seeking and aiming at this, by the use of all means? Then certainly thou shalt find life in them. But does thy heart

still remain uncleansed from the old ways, not purified from the pollutions of the world? Do thy beloved sins still lodge with thee, and keep possession of thy heart? Then art thou still a stranger to Christ, and an enemy to God. The word and seals of life are dead to thee, and thou art still dead in the use of them all. Know you not that many have made shipwreck upon the very rock of salvation? that many who were baptized as well as you, and as constant attendants on all the worship and ordinances of God as you, yet have remained without Christ and died in their sins, and are now past recovery? Oh that you would be warned! There are still multitudes running headlong that same course, tending to destruction, through the midst of all the means of salvation; the saddest way of all to it, through word and sacraments, and all heavenly ordinances, to be walking hellwards! Christians, and yet no Christians; baptized, and yet unbaptized! As the Prophet takes in the profane multitude of God's own people with the nations, Jer. ix. 26, *Egypt, and Judah, and Edom; all these nations are uncircumcised*: and the worst came last; *and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart*: thus, thus, the most of us are unbaptized in the heart.

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We have been a long time hearers of the Gospel, whereof Baptism is the seal, and most of us often at the Lord's Table. What hath all this done upon us? Ask within: Are your hearts changed? Is there a new creation there? Where is that spiritual mindedness? Are your hearts dead to the world and sin, and alive to God, *your consciences purged from dead works*?

What mean you? Is not this the end of all the ordinances, to make all clean, and to renew and make good the conscience, to bring the soul and your Lord into a happy amity, and a good correspondence, that it may not only be on speaking terms, but often speak and converse with Him?—may have liberty both to demand and answer, as the original word implies? that it may speak the language of faith and humble obedience unto God, and that he may speak the language of peace to it, and both, the language of the Lord each to the other?

That conscience alone is good, which is much busied in this work, in demanding and answering; which speaks much with itself, and much with God. This is both the sign that it is good, and the means to make it better. That soul will doubtless be very wary in its walk, which takes daily account of itself, and renders up that account unto God. It will not live by guess, but naturally examine each step before hand, because it is resolved to examine all after; will consider well what it should do because it means to ask over again what it hath done, and not only to answer itself, but to make a faithful report of all unto God; to lay all before Him, continually upon trial made; to tell Him what is in any measure well done, as His own work, and

bless Him for that ; and tell Him, too, all the slips and miscarriages of the day, as our own ; complaining of ourselves in His presence, and still entreating free pardon, and more wisdom to walk more holily and exactly, and gaining, even by our failings, more humility and more watchfulness.

If you would have your consciences answer well, they must inquire and question much before hand. Whether is this I purpose and go about, agreeable to my Lord's will ? Will it please him ? Ask that more, and regard that more, than this, which the most follow. Will it please or profit myself ? Fits that my own humor ? And examine not only the bulk and substance of thy ways and actions, but the manner of them, how thy heart is set. So think it not enough to go to church, or to pray, but *take heed how ye hear* : consider how pure He is, and how piercing his eye, whom thou servest.

Then, again, afterwards ; think it not enough, I was praying, or hearing, or reading, it was a good work, what need I question it further ? No, but be still reflecting and asking how it was done : How have I heard, how have I prayed ? Was my heart humbled by the discoveries of sin, from the word ? Was it refreshed with the promises of grace ? Did it lie level under the word to receive the stamp of it ? Was it in prayer set and kept in a holy bent towards God ? Did it breathe forth real and earnest desires into His ear ; or was it remiss, and roving, and dead in the service ? So in my society with others, in such and such company, what was spent of my time, and how did I employ it ? Did I seek to honor my Lord, and to edify my brethren, by my carriage and speeches ; or did the time run out in trifling vain discourse ? When alone, what is the carriage and walk of my heart ? Where it hath most liberty to move in its own pace, is it delighted in converse with God ? Are the thoughts of heavenly things frequent and sweet to it ; or does it run after the earth and the delights of it, spinning out itself in impertinent and vain contrivances ?

The neglect of such inquiries, is that which entertains and increases the impurity of the soul, so that men are afraid to look into themselves, and to look up to God. But oh ! what a foolish course is this, to shift off what cannot be avoided ! In the end, answer must be made to that All-seeing Judge with whom we have to do, and to whom we owe our accounts.

And, truly, it should be seriously considered, what makes this good conscience, which makes an acceptable answer unto God. that appears by the opposition, *not the putting away the filth of the flesh* ; then, it is the putting away of *soul filthiness* ; so it is the renewing and purifying of the conscience, that makes it good, pure, and peaceable. In the purifying, it may be troubled, which is but the stirring in cleansing of it, and makes more quiet in the



end, as physic, or the lancing of a sore ; and after it is in some measure cleansed, it may have fits of trouble, which yet still add further purity and further peace. So there is no hazard in that work ; but all the misery is, a dead security of the conscience while remaining filthy, and yet unstirred ; or, after some stirring or pricking, as a wound not thoroughly cured, skinned over, which will but breed more vexation in the end ; it will fester and grow more difficult to be cured, and if it be cured, it must be by deeper cutting and more pain, than if at first had it endured a thorough search.

O, my brethren ! take heed of sleeping unto death in carnal ease. Resolve to take no rest till you be in the element and place of soul rest, where solid rest indeed is. Rest not till you be with Christ. Though all the world should offer their best, turn them by with disdain ; if they will not be turned by, throw them down, and go over them, and trample upon them. Say you have no rest to give me, nor will I take any at your hands, nor from any creature. There is no rest for me till I be under His shadow, who endured so much trouble to purchase my rest, and whom having found, I may sit down quiet and satisfied ; and when the men of the world make boast of the highest content, I will outvie them all with this one word, *My beloved is mine, and I am His.*

#### The foundation of a good Conscience.

The conscience of man is never rightly at peace in itself, till it be rightly persuaded of peace with God, which, while it remains filthy, it cannot be ; for He is holy, and iniquity cannot dwell with Him. What *communion betwixt light and darkness ?* 2 Cor. vi. 14. So then the conscience must be cleansed, ere it can look upon God with assurance and peace. This cleansing is sacramentally performed by Baptism ; effectually, by the Spirit of Christ and the blood of Christ ; and He lives to impart both : therefore here is mentioned His resurrection from the dead, as that, by virtue whereof we are assured of this purifying and peace. Then can the conscience, in some measure with confidence, answer, Lord, though polluted by former sins, and by sin still dwelling in me, yet Thou seest that my desires are to be daily more like my Saviour ; I would have more love and zeal for Thee, more hatred of sin. It can answer with St. Peter, when he was posed, *Lovest thou me ?* Lord I appeal to Thine own eye, who seest my heart : *Lord, thou knowest that I love Thee ;* at least I desire to love thee, and to desire Thee ; and that is love. Willingly would I do Thee more suitable service, and honor Thy name more ; and I do sincerely desire more grace for this, that Thou mayst have more glory ; and I entreat the light of Thy countenance for this end, that, by seeing it, my heart may be

more weaned from the world, and knit unto Thyself. Thus it answers touching its inward frame and the work of holiness by the Spirit of holiness dwelling in it. But, to answer Justice, touching the point of guilt, it flies to the *Blood of sprinkling*, fetches all its answer thence, turns over the matter upon it, and that blood answers for it: for it doth speak, and *speak better things than the blood of Abel*, Heb. xii. 24; speaks full payment of all that can be exacted from the sinner; and that is a sufficient answer.

The conscience is then, in this point, at first made speechless, driven to a nonplus in itself, hath from itself no answer to make; but then it turns about to Christ, and finds what to say: Lord, there is indeed in me nothing but guiltiness; I have deserved death; but I have fled into the City of refuge which Thou hast appointed; there I resolve to abide, to live and die there. If Justice pursue me, it shall find me there: I take sanctuary in Jesus. The arrest laid upon me, will light upon Him, and He hath wherewithal to answer it. He can straightway declare He hath paid all, and can make it good. He hath the acquaintance to shew; yea, His own liberty is a real sign of it. He was in prison, and is let free, which tells that all is satisfied. Therefore the answer here rises out of the *resurrection of Jesus Christ*.

And in this very thing lies our peace, and our way, and all our happiness. Oh! it is worth your time and pains, to try your interest in this; it is the only thing worthy your highest diligence. But the most are out of their wits, running like a number of distracted persons, and still in a deal of business, but to what end they know not. You are unwilling to be deceived in those things which, at their best and surest, do but deceive you when all is done; but are content to be deceived in that which is your great concernment. You are your own deceivers in it; gladly gulled with shadows of faith and repentance, false touches of sorrow, and false flashes of joy, and are not careful to have your souls really unbottomed from themselves, and built upon Christ: to have Him your treasure, your righteousness, your all, and to have Him your answer unto God your Father. But if you will yet be advised, let go all, to lay hold on Him: lay your souls on Him, and leave Him not. He is a *tried foundation-stone*, and he that trusts on Him, shall not be confounded.

#### USE TO BE MADE OF GIFTS AND GRACES.

As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

The first thing which meets us here, it is very useful to know, that all is *received*, and received of *gift*, of most *free gift*: so the

words do carry. Now this should most reasonably check all murmuring in those who receive least, and all insulting in those that receive most. Whatever it is, do not repine; but praise, how little soever it is, for it is a free gift. Again, how much soever it is, *be not high-minded, but fear*; boast not thyself, but humbly bless thy Lord. *For if thou didst receive it, why dost thou boast, as if thou hadst not received it?* 1 Cor. iv. 7.

Every man hath received some gift, no man all gifts; and this, rightly considered, would keep all in a more even temper. As, in nature, nothing is altogether useless, so nothing is self-sufficient. This should keep the meanest from repining and discontent: He that hath the lowest rank in most respects, yet something he hath received, that is not only a good to himself, but, rightly improved, may be so to others likewise. And this will curb the loftiness of the most highly privileged, and teach them, not only to see some deficiencies in themselves, and some gifts in far meaner persons, which they want, but, besides the simple discovery of this, it will put them upon the use of what is in lower persons; not only to stoop to the acknowledgement, but even, withal, to the participation and benefit of it; not to trample upon all that is below them, but to take up and use things useful, though lying at their feet. Some flowers and herbs, that grow very low, are of a very fragrant smell and healthful use.

Thou that carriest it so high, lovest much by it. Many poor Christians whom thou despisest to make use of, may have that in them which might be very useful for thee; but thou overlookest it, and treadest on it. St. Paul acknowledgeth he was *comforted by the coming of Titus*, though far inferior to him. Sometimes, a very mean, unlettered Christian may speak more profitably and comfortably, even to a knowing, learned man, than multitudes of his own best thoughts can do, especially in a time of weakness and darkness.

As all is received and with that difference, so the third thing is, that all is received *to minister to each other*, and mutual benefit is the true use of all, suiting the mind of Him who dispenses all, and the way of His dispensation. Thou art not proprietary lord of anything thou hast, but *a steward*; and therefore oughtest gladly to be a good steward, that is both faithful and prudent in thy intrusted gifts, using all thou hast to the good of the Household, and so to the advantage of thy Lord and Master. Hast thou abilities of estate, or body or mind? Let all be thus employed. Thinkest thou that thy wealth, or power, or wit, is thine, to do with us as thou wilt, to engross to thyself, either to retain useless, or to use; to hoard and wrap up, or to lavish out, according as thy humor leads thee? No, all is given as to a steward, wisely and faithfully to lay up and lay out. Not only thy outward and common gifts of mind, but even saving grace, which seems most intrusted and ap-



propriated for thy private good, yet is wholly for that : even thy graces are for the good of thy brethren.

Oh, that we would consider this in all, and look back and mourn on the fruitlessness of all that hath been in our hand all our life hitherto ! If it has not been wholly fruitless, yet how far short of that fruit we might have brought forth ! Any little thing done by us looks big in our eye ; we view it through a magnifying glass ; but who may not complain that their means, and health, and opportunities of several kinds, of doing for God and for our brethren, have lain dead upon their hands, in a great part ? As Christians are defective in other duties of love, so most in that most important duty, of advancing the spiritual good of each other. Even they who have grace, do not duly use it to mutual edification. I desire none to leap over the bounds of their calling, or the rules of Christian prudence in their converse ; yea, this were much to be blamed ; but I fear lest unwary hands throwing on water to quench that evil, have let some of it fall aside upon those sparks that should rather have been stirred and blown up.

Neither should the disproportion of gifts and graces hinder Christians to *minister one to another* : it should neither move the weaker to envy the stronger, nor the stronger to despise the weaker ; but each, in his place, is to be serviceable to the others, as the Apostle excellently presses, by that most fit resemblance of the parts of the body. *As the foot says not, Why am I not the eye or the head, the head cannot say of the foot, I have no need of thee.* 1 Cor. xii. 15, 21. There is no envy, no despising in the natural body. Oh the pity there should be so much in the mystical ! Were we more spiritual, less of this would be found. In the mean time, Oh, that we were more agreeable to that happy estate we look for, in our present aspect and carriage one towards another ! Though all the graces of the Spirit exist, in some measure, where there is one, yet not all in a like measure. One Christian is more eminent in meekness, another in humility, a third in zeal, &c. Now, by their spiritual converse one with another, each may be a gainer ; and in many ways may a private Christian promote the good of others with whom he lives, by seasonable admonitions, and advice, and reproof, sweetened with meekness, but most by holy example, which is the most lively and most effectual speech.

Thou that hast greater gifts hast more intrusted in thy hand, and therefore the greater thy obligation to fidelity and diligence. Men in great place and public services, ought to stir themselves up by this thought, to singular watchfulness and zeal. And in private converse one with another, we ought to be doing and receiving spiritual good. Are we not strangers here ? Is it not strange that we so often meet and part, without a word of our home, or the way to it, or our advance towards it ? Christians



should be trading one with another in spiritual things; and he, surely, who faithfully uses most, receives most. This is comprehended under that word: *To him that hath (i. e. possesses actively and usefully,) shall be given: and from him that hath not, (i. e. uses not,) shall be taken away even that which he hath.* Matt. xxv. 29. Merchants can feel in their trading a dead time, and complain seriously of it; but Christians, in theirs, either can suffer it and not see it, or see it and not complain, or, possibly, complain, and yet not be deeply sensible of it.

Certainly, it cannot be sufficiently regretted, that we are so fruitless in the Lord's work in this kind, that when we are alone we study it not more, nor seek it more by prayer, to know the true use of all we receive, and that we do not in society endeavor it accordingly; but we trifle out our time, and instead of the commerce of grace to our mutual enriching, we trade in vanity, and are, as it were, children exchanging shells and toys together.

This surely will lie heavy upon the conscience when we reflect on it, and shall come near the utter brink of time, looking forwards on eternity, and then looking back to our days, so vainly wasted, and worn out to so little purpose. Oh! let us awake, awake ourselves and one another, to more fruitfulness and faithfulness, whatsoever be our received measure, less or more.

Be not discouraged: to have little in the account shall be no prejudice. The approbation runs not, *Thou hast much*, but on the contrary, *Thou hast been faithful in little*. Great faithfulness in the use of small gifts, hath great acceptance, and a great and sure reward. Great receipts engage to greater returns, and therefore require the greater diligence; and that not only for the increase of grace within, but for the assistance of it in others. Retired contemplation may be more pleasing, but due activity for God and His Church is more profitable. Rachel was fair, but she was barren; Leah blear-eyed, but fruitful.

#### Dependence upon God.

And this, truly, is a chief thing for ministers, and for individual Christians, still to depend on the influence and strength of God; to do all his works in that strength. The humblest Christian, how weak soever, is the strongest. There is a natural wretched independency in us, that we would be the authors of our own works, and do all without Him, without whom indeed we can do nothing. Let us learn to go more out of ourselves, and we shall find more strength for our duties, and against our temptations. Faith's great work is, to renounce self-power, and to bring in the power of God to be ours. Happy they that are weakest in themselves, sensibly so. That word of the Apostle is theirs; they know what it means, though a riddle to the world: *When I am weak, then am I strong.* 2 Cor. xii. 10.

## Object of all Christian Gifts and Institutions.

The *End* of all this appointment is, *that in all God may be glorified through Jesus Christ*. All meet in this, if they move in their straight line : here concentre, not only these two sorts specified in this verse, but all sorts of persons that use aright any gift of God, as they are generally comprehended in the former verse. For this end relates to all, as it is expressed universally, *That in all*, in all persons and all things ; the word bears both, and the thing itself extends to both.

Here we have, like that of the heavens, a circular motion of all sanctified good : it comes forth from God, through Christ, unto Christians, and moving in them to the mutual good of each other, returns through Christ unto God again, and takes them along with it, in whom it was, and had its motion.

All persons and all things shall pay this tribute, even they that most wickedly seek to withhold it ; but this is the happiness of the saints, that they move willingly thus, are sweetly drawn, not forced or driven. They are gained to seek and desire this, to set in with God in the intention of the same end : to have the same purpose with Him, His glory in all, and to prosecute His end by His direction, by the means and ways He appoints them.

This is His due, as God ; and the declining from this, the squinting from this view to self-ends, especially in God's own peculiar work, is high treason. Yet, the base heart of man leads naturally this way, to intend himself in all, to raise his own esteem or advantage in some way. And in this the heart is so subtle, that it will deceive the most discerning, if they be not constant in suspecting and watching it. This is the great task, to overcome in this point : to have self under our feet, and God only in our eye and purpose in all.

It is most reasonable, His due as God the author of all, not only of all supervenient good, but even of being itself, seeing all is from Him, that all be for Him : *For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things : to Whom be glory for ever. Amen.* Rom. xi. ult.

As it is most just, so it is also most sweet, to aim in all at this, *that God be glorified* : it is the alone worthy and happy design, which fills the heart with heavenliness, and with a heavenly calmness ; sets it above the clouds and storms of those passions which disquiet low, self-seeking minds. He is a miserable, unsettled wretch, who cleaves to himself and forgets God ; is perplexed about his credit, and gain, and base ends, which are often broken, and which, when he attains, yet they and he must shortly perish together. When his estate, or designs, or any comforts fail, how can he look to Him at whom he looked so little before ?

May not the Lord say, *Go to the gods whom thou hast served, and let them deliver and comfort thee*; seek comfort from thyself, as thou didst all for thyself? What an appalment will this be! But he that hath resigned himself, and is all for God, may say confidently, that *the Lord is his portion*. This is the Christian's aim, to have nothing in himself, nor in anything, but on this tenure: all for the glory of my God,—my estate, family, abilities, my whole self, all I have and am. And as the love of God grows in the heart, this purpose grows: the higher the flame rises, the purer it is. The eye is daily more upon it; it is oftener in the mind in all actions than before. In common things, the very works of our callings, our very refreshments, to eat and drink, and sleep, are all for this end, and with a particular aim at it as much as may be; even the thought of it often renewed throughout the day, and at times, generally applied to all our ways and employments. It is this elixir that turns thy ordinary works into gold, into sacrifices by the touch of it.

*Through Jesus Christ.*] The Christian in covenant with God, receives all this way, and returns all this way. And Christ possesses, and hath equal right with the Father to this glory, as He is equally the spring of it with Him, as God. But it is conveyed through him as Mediator, who obtains all the grace we receive; and all the glory, we return, and all our praise, as our spiritual sacrifice, is put into His hand as our High-priest, to offer up for us, that they may be accepted.

Now the holy ardor of the Apostle's affections, taken with the mention of this glory of God, carries him to a *doxology*, as we term it, a rendering of glory, in the middle of his discourse. Thus often we find in St. Paul likewise. Poor and short lived is the glory and grandeur of men; like themselves, it is a shadow, and nothing; but this is solid and lasting, it is supreme, and abideth *for ever*. And the Apostles, full of divine affections, and admiring nothing but God, do delight in this, and cannot refrain from this at any time in their discourse: it is always sweet and seasonable, and they find it so. And thus are spiritual minds: a word of this nature falls on them as a spark on some matter that readily takes fire; they are straight inflamed with it. But alas! to us how much is it otherwise! The mention of the praises and glory of our God, is, to our hearts, as a spark falling either into a puddle of water, and foul water too, or at least, as upon green timber, that much fire will not kindle; there is so much moisture of our humors and corruptions, that all dies out with us, and we remain cold and dead.

But were not this a high and blessed condition, to be in all estates in some willing readiness to bear a part in this song, to acknowledge the greatness and goodness of our God, and to wish Him glory in all? What are the angels doing? This is their



business, and that without end. And seeing we hope to partake with them, we should even here, though in a lower key, and not so tunably neither, yet, as we may, begin it; and upon all occasions, our hearts should be often following in this sweet note, or offering at it, *To Him be glory and dominion for ever.*

#### THE CHRISTIAN CONFLICT.

Beloved think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.

But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

This fighting life, surely, when we consider it aright, we need not be dissuaded from loving it, but have rather need to be strengthened with patience to go through, and to fight on with courage and assurance of victory; still combating in a higher strength than our own, against sin within and troubles without. This is the great scope of this Epistle, and the Apostle often interchanges his advices and comforts in reference to these two. *Against sin* he instructs us in the beginning of this chapter, urging us to be armed, *armed with the same mind* that was in Christ, and here again, *against suffering*, and both in a like way. In the mortifying of sin, we suffer with Him, as there he teaches, verse 1 of this chapter: and in the encountering of affliction, we suffer with Him, as here we have it: and so, the same mind in the same sufferings, will bring us to the same issue. *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, &c. But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye likewise may be glad with exceeding joy.*

The words, to the end of the chapter, contain grounds of encouragement and consolation for the children of God in sufferings, especially in suffering for God.

These two verses have these two things, I. The close conjunction of sufferings with the estate of a Christian. II. The due composure of a Christian towards suffering.

I. It is no new, and therefore no strange thing, that sufferings, hot sufferings, fiery ones, be the companions of religion. Besides the common miseries of human life, there is an accession of troubles and hatreds for that holiness of life to which the children of God are called.

It was the lot of the Church from her wicked neighbors, and in the Church, the lot of the most holy and peculiar servants of God, from the profane multitude. *Wo is me, my Mother*, says Jeremiah, *that thou hast born me a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth.* Jer. xv. 10. And of all the Prophets, says not our Saviour, handling this same argument in his ser-



mon, *So persecuted they the prophets that were before you?* Matt. v. 12. And afterwards, he tells them what they might look for: *Behold*, says He, *I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.* Matt. x. 16. And, in general, there is no following of Christ, but with His badge and burden. Something is to be left, we ourselves are to be left—*Whosoever will be my disciple, let him deny himself*; and somewhat to take—*Take up his cross and follow me.* Matt. xvi. 24. And doth not the Apostle give his scholars this universal lesson, as an infallible truth, *All that will live godly in Jesus Christ, shall suffer persecution?* Look in the close of that roll of believers conquering in suffering, what a cluster of sufferings and torture you have. Heb. xi. 36, &c. Thus in the primitive times, the trial, and fiery trial, even literally so, continued long. Those wicked emperors hated the very innocency of Christians; and the people, though they knew their blameless carriage, yet when any evil came, would pick this quarrel, and still cry, *Christianos ad leones.*

Now this, if we look to inferior causes, is *not strange*, the malignant ungodly world hating holiness, *hating the light*, yea, the very shadow of it. And the more the children of God walk like their Father and their home, the more unlike must they, of necessity, become to the world about them, and therefore become the very mark of all their enmities and malice.

And thus indeed, the godly, though the *sons of peace*, are the improper causes, the occasion of much noise and disturbance in the world; as their Lord, the Prince of Peace, avows it openly of Himself in that sense, *I came not to send peace, but a sword, to set a man at variance with his father, and the daughter against the mother, &c.* Matt. x. 34. If a son in a family begin to inquire after God, and withdraw from their profane or dead way, Oh, what a clamor rises presently! “Oh, my son, or daughter, or wife, is become a plain fool,” &c. And then is all done that may be, to quell and vex them, and make their life grievous to them.

The exact holy walking of a Christian really condemns the world about Him: shows the disorder and foulness of their profane ways. The life of religion, set by the side of dead formality, discovers it to be a carcass, a lifeless appearance; and, for this, neither grossly wicked, nor decent, formal persons, can well digest it. There is in the life of a Christian a convincing light, that shews the deformity of the works of darkness, and a piercing heat, that scorches the ungodly, and stirs and troubles their consciences. This they cannot endure, and hence rises in them a contrary fire of wicked hatred, and hence the trials, the fiery trials of the godly. If they could get those precise persons removed out of their way, they think they might then have more room, and live at more liberty: as it is, Rev. xi, 10, a *carousing*.

What a dance there was about the two dead bodies of the Two Witnesses! *The people and nations rejoiced and made merry, and sent gifts one to another, because these two Prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.* And from the same hearth, I mean the same wickedness of heart in the world, are the fires of persecution kindled against the saints in the world, and the bonfires of joy when they are rid of them.

And as this is an infernal fire of enmity against God, so it is blown by that spirit whose element it is. Satan stirs up and blows the coal, and raises the hatred of the ungodly against Christians.

But while he, and they in whom he powerfully works, are thus working for their vile ends in the persecution of the saints, He who sovereignly orders all, is working in the same, His wise and gracious ends, and attains them, and makes the malice of His enemies serve His ends and undo their own. It is true, that by the heat of persecution many are scared from embracing religion: such as love themselves and their present ease, and others that seemed to have embraced it, are driven to let it go and fall from it; but yet, when all is well computed, religion is still upon the gaining hand. Those who reject it, or revolt from it, are such as have no true knowledge of it, or share in it, nor in that happiness in which it ends. But they that are indeed united to Jesus Christ, do cleave the closer to Him, and seek to have their hearts more fastened to Him, because of the trials that they are, or may probably be put to. And in their victorious patience appears the invincible power of religion where it hath once gained the heart, that it cannot be beaten or burnt out: itself is a fire more mighty than all the fires kindled against it. The love of Christ conquers and triumphs in the hardest sufferings of life, and in death itself.

And this hath been the means of kindling it in other hearts which were strangers to it, when they beheld the victorious patience of the saints, who conquered dying, as their Head did; who wearied their tormentors, and triumphed over their cruelty by a constancy far above it.

Thus, these fiery trials make the lustre of faith most appear, as gold shines brightest in the furnace: and if any dross be mixed with it, it is refined and purified from it by these trials, and so it remains, by means of the fire, purer than before. And both these are in the resemblance here intended: that the fire of sufferings is for the advantage of believers, both as trying the excellency of faith, giving evidence of it, what it is, and also purifying it from earth and drossy mixtures, and making it more excellently what it is, raising it to a higher pitch of refinedness and worth. In these fires, as faith is tried, so the word on which faith relies is tried, and is found *all gold*, most precious, no refuse in it. The truth and sweetness of the promises are much confirmed in the

Christian's heart, upon his experiment of them in his sufferings. His God is found to be as good as His word, being with him when he goes through the fire, (Isa. xliii. 2) preserving him, so that he loses nothing except dross, which is a gainful loss, leaves only of his corruption behind him.

Oh! how much worth is it, and how doth it endear the heart to God, to have found Him sensibly present in the times of trouble, refreshing the soul with dews of spiritual comfort, in the midst of the flames of fiery trial!

One special advantage of these fires is, the purifying of a Christian's heart from the love of the world and of present things. It is true, the world at best is base and despicable, in respect of the high estate and hopes of a believer; yet still there is somewhat with him, that would bend him downwards, and draw him to too much complacency in outward things, if they were much to his mind. Too kind usage might sometimes make him forget himself and think himself at home, at least so much as not to entertain those longings after home, and that ardent progress homewards, that become him. It is good for us, certainly, to find hardship, and enmities, and contempts here, and to find them frequent, that we may not think them *strange*, but ourselves *strangers*, and may think it were strange for us to be otherwise entertained. This keeps the affections more clear and disengaged, sets them upward. Thus the Lord makes the world displeasing to His own, that they may turn in to Him, and seek all their consolations in Himself. Oh, unspeakable advantage!

#### The Christian's joy amidst Sufferings.

The children of God are not called to so sad a life as the World imagines: besides what is laid up for them in heaven, they have, even here, their rejoicings and songs in their distresses, as those prisoners had their psalms even at midnight, after their stripes, and in their chains, before they knew of a sudden deliverance. (Acts xvi. 25.) True, there may be a darkness within, clouding all the matter of their joy, but even that darkness is the seed-time of after-joy: light is sown in that darkness, and shall spring up; and not only shall they have a rich crop at full harvest, but even some first-fruits of it here, in pledge of the harvest.

And this they ought to expect, and to seek after with minds humble and submissive as to the measure and time of it, that they may be partakers of spiritual joy, and may by it be enabled to go patiently, yea, cheerfully, through the tribulations and temptations that lie in their way homeward. And for this end they ought to endeavor after a more clear discerning of their interest in Christ, that they may know they partake of Him, and so, that in suffering, they are partakers of His sufferings and shall be partakers of His glory.



Many afflictions will not cloud and obstruct this, so much as one sin; therefore, if ye would walk cheerfully, be most careful to walk holily. All the winds about the earth make not an earthquake, but only that within.

Now this Joy is grounded on this communion, [1.] in sufferings, then, [2.] in glory.

[1.] Even in sufferings themselves. It is a sweet, a joyful thing to be a sharer with Christ in anything. All enjoyments wherein He is not, are bitter to a soul that loves Him, and all sufferings with Him are sweet. The worst things of Christ are more truly delightful than the best things of the world; His afflictions are sweeter than their pleasures, His *reproach* more glorious than their honors, and more rich than their treasures, as Moses accounted them. Heb. xi. 26. Love delights in likeness and communion, not only in things otherwise pleasant, but in the hardest and harshest things, which have not anything in them desirable, but only that likeness. So that this thought is very sweet to a heart possessed with this love: What does the World, by its hatred, and persecutions, and revilings for the sake of Christ, but make me more like Him, give me a greater share with Him, in that which He did so willingly undergo for me? *When He was sought for to be made a king*, as St. Bernard remarks, *He escaped*; but *when He was sought to be brought to the Cross, He freely yielded Himself*. And shall I shrink and creep back from what He calls me to suffer for His sake! Yea, even all my other troubles and sufferings, I will desire to have stamped thus, with this conformity to the sufferings of Christ, in the humble, obedient, cheerful, endurance of them, and the giving up my will to my Father's.

The following of Christ makes any way pleasant. His faithful followers refuse no march after Him, be it through deserts, and mountains, and storms, and hazards, that will alfright self-pleasing, easy spirits. Hearts kindled and actuated with the Spirit of Christ, will *follow Him wheresoever He goeth*.

As He speaks it for warning to His Disciples, *If they persecute me, they will persecute you*, so He speaks it for comfort to them, and sufficient comfort it is, *If they hate you, they hated me before you*. John xv. 18, 20.

[2.] Then add the other: see whither it tends. *He shall be revealed in His glory*, and ye shall even overflow with joy in the partaking of that glory. Therefore, rejoice now in the midst of all your sufferings. Stand upon the advanced ground of the promises and the covenant of Grace, and by faith look beyond this moment, and all that is in it, to that day wherein *everlasting joy shall be upon your heads*, a crown of it, and *sorrow and mourning shall flee away*. Isa. li. 11. Believe in this day, and the victory is won. Oh! that blessed hope, well fixed and exercised



would give other manner of spirits. What zeal for God would it not inspire! What invincible courage against all encounters! How soon will this pageant of the world vanish, that men are gazing on, these pictures and fancies of pleasures and honors, falsely so called, and give place to the real glory of the sons of God, when this blessed Son, who is God, shall be seen appearing in full majesty, and all His brethren in glory with Him, all clothed in their robes! And if you ask, Who are they, Why, *these are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.* Rev. vii. 14.

We should suffer, not as Evil-doers, but as Christians.

*Suffer as Christians*, holily and blamelessly, that the Enemy may not know where to fasten his hold. As the wrestlers anointed their bodies, that the hands of their antagonists might not fasten upon them, thus, truly, they that walk and suffer as Christians anointed with the Spirit of Christ, their enemies cannot well fasten their hold upon them.

To you, therefore, who love the Lord Jesus, I recommend this especially, to be careful that all your reproaches may be indeed for Christ, and not for anything in you unlike to Christ; that there be nothing save the matter of your rod. Keep the quarrel as clean and unmixed as you can, and this will advantage you much, both within and without, in the peace and firmness of your minds, and in the refutation of your enemies. This will make you *as a brazen wall*, as the Lord speaks to the Prophet: *they shall fight against you, but shall not prevail.* Jer. xv. 20.

Keep far off from all impure, unholy ways. *Suffer not as evil-doers*, no, nor as *busy-bodies*. Be much at home, setting things at rights within your own breast, where there is so much work, and such daily need of diligence, and then you will find no leisure for unnecessary idle prying into the ways and affairs of others; and further than your calling and the rules of Christian charity engage you, you will not interpose in any matters without you, nor be found proud and censorious, as the World is ready to call you.

Shun the appearances of evil: walk warily and prudently in all things. Be not *heady*, nor *self-willed*, no, not in the best thing. Walk not upon the utter brink and hedge of your liberty, for then you shall be in danger of overpassing it. Things that are lawful may be inexpedient, and, in case there is fear of scandal, ought either to be wholly forborne, or used with much prudence and circumspection. Oh, study in all things to adorn the Gospel, and under a sense of your own unskilfulness and folly, beg wisdom from above, that *Anointing that will teach you all things*, much of that *holy Spirit, that will lead you in the way of all truth*; and then,

in that way, whatsoever may befall you, *suffer it*, and however you may be vilified and reproached, *happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.*

But if to be thus reproached is to be happy, then, certainly, their reproaches are not less unhappy. If on those resteth the *Spirit of glory and of God*, what spirit is in these, but the spirit of Satan, and of shame and vileness? Who is the basest, most contemptible kind of person in the world? Truly, I think, an avowed contemner and mocker of holiness. Shall any such be found amongst us?

I charge you all in this name of Christ, that you do not entertain godless prejudices against the people of God. Let not your ears be open to, nor your hearts close with the calumnies and lies that may be flying abroad of them and their practices; much less open your mouths against them, or let any disgraceful word be heard from you. And when you meet with undeniable real frailties, know the *law of love*, and to practise it. Think, This is blameworthy, yet let me not turn it to the reproach of those persons, who, notwithstanding, may be sincere, much less to the reproach of other persons professing religion, and then cast it upon religion itself.

My brethren, beware of sharing with the ungodly in this tongue-persecution of Christians. There is a day at hand, wherein the Lord will make inquiry after these things. If we shall be made accountable for *idle words*, (as we are warned, Matt. xii. 36,) how much more for bitter malicious words uttered against any, especially against the saints of God, whom, however the World may reckon, He esteems His precious ones, His treasure! You that now can look on them with a scornful eye, which way shall you look when they shall be beautiful and glorious, and all the ungodly clothed with shame? Oh, do not reproach them, but rather come in and share with them in the way of holiness, and in all the sufferings and reproaches that follow it. for if you partake of their disgraces, you shall share in glory with them, in the day of their Lord's appearing.

#### The Christian's Happiness indestructible.

Thus solid, indeed, is the happiness of the saints, that in the lowest condition it remains the same: in disgraces, in caves, in prisons and chains, cast them where you will, still they are happy. A diamond in the mire, sullied and trampled on, yet still retains its own worth. But this is more, that the very things that seem to make them miserable, do not only not do that, but, on the contrary, do make them the more happy: they are gainers by their losses, and attain more liberty by their thraldoms, and more honor by their disgraces, and more peace by their troubles. Tho

World and all their enemies are exceedingly befooled in striving against them: not only can they not undo them, but by all their enmity and practices, they do them pleasure, and raise them higher. With what weapons shall they fight? How shall a Christian's enemies set upon him? Where shall they hit him, seeing that all the wrongs they do him, do indeed enrich and ennoble him, and that the more he is depressed, he flourishes the more. Certainly, the blessedness of a Christian is matchless and invincible.

If we suffer for the name of Christ, then the Spirit of Glory and of God resteth upon us.

And what is there so rough which that will not make pleasant, to suffer with Christ and for Christ, who suffered so much and so willingly for thee? Hath He not gone through all before thee, and made all easy and lovely? Hath He not sweetened poverty, and persecution, and hatred, and disgraces, and death itself, perfumed the grave, and turned it from a pit of horror into a sweet resting bed? And thus love of Christ judgeth: it thinks all lovely which is endured for Him, is glad to meet with difficulties, and is ambitious of suffering for Him. Scorn or contempt is a thing of hard digestion, but much inward heat of love digests it easily. Reproaches are bitter, but the reproaches of Christ are sweet. Take their true value, Heb. xi. 26: *The reproaches of Christ are greater riches than the treasures of Egypt*: His very worst things, better than the best of the world. A touch of Christ turns all into gold: His reproaches are *riches*, as it is expressed there, and *honor*, as here. *Happy!* Not only afterwards shall ye be happy, but *happy are ye*, at present; and that, not only in apprehension of that after happiness, as sure, and as already present to Faith realizing it, but even in that they now possess the presence and comforts of the Spirit.

*For the Spirit of glory.*] This accompanies disgraces for Him; *His Spirit, the Spirit of glory and of God*. With your sufferings goes the name of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ: take them thus, when reproaches are cast upon you for His name, and you are enabled to bear them by His Spirit. And surely His Spirit is most fit to support you under them, yea, to raise you above them. They are ignominious and inglorious, He is the Spirit of glory: they are human reproaches, He, the Divine Spirit, *the Spirit of glory and of God*, that is, the glorious Spirit of God.

And this is the advantage: the less the Christian finds esteem and acceptance in the world, the more he turns his eye inward, to see what is there; and there he finds the world's contempt counterpoised by a weight of excellency and glory, even in this present condition, as the pledge of the glory before him. The reproaches be fiery; but the *Spirit of glory resteth upon you*, doth

not give you a passing visit, but stays within you, and is indeed yours. And in this the Christian can take comfort, and let the foul weather blow over, let all the scoffs and contempts abroad pass as they come, having a glorious Spirit within, such a guest honoring him with His presence, abode, and sweet fellowship, being, indeed, one with Him. So that rich miser at Athens could say,—when they scorned him in the streets, he went home to his bags, and hugging himself there at the sight, let them say what they would :—

—————Populus me sibilat ; at mihi plaudo  
Ipse domi, simul ac nummos contemtor in arca.

How much more reasonably may the Christian say, Let them revile and bark, I have riches and honor enough that they see not. And this is what makes the world, as they are a malicious party, so to be an incompetent judge of the Christian's estate. They see the rugged unpleasant outside only : the right inside their eye cannot reach. We were miserable indeed, were our comforts such as they could see.

And while this is the constant estate of a Christian, it is usually most manifested to him in the time of his greatest sufferings. Then, (as we said) he naturally turns inward and sees it most, and accordingly finds it most. God making this happy supplement and compensation, that when His people have least of the world they have most of Himself : when they are most covered with the World's disfavor, His favor shines brightest to them. As Moses, when he was in the cloud, had nearest access and speech with God ; so when the Christian is most clouded with distresses and disgraces, then doth the Lord often shew Himself most clearly to him.

If you be indeed Christians, you will not be so much thinking, at any time, how you may be free from all sufferings and despirings, but rather, how you may go strongly and cheerfully through them. Lo, here is the way : seek a real and firm interest in Christ, and a participation of Christ's Spirit, and then a look to Him will make all easy and delightful. Thou wilt be ashamed within thyself to start back, or yield one foot, at the encounter of taunt or reproach for Him. Thou wilt think, For whom is it ? Is it not for Him who for my sake hid not His face from shame and spitting ? And further, He died : now, how should I meet death for Him, who shrink at the blast of a scornful word ?

If you would know whether this His Spirit is and resteth in you, it cannot be better known than, 1<sup>st</sup>, By that very love, ardent love to Him, and high esteem of Him, and, from thence, a willingness, yea, a gladness to suffer anything for Him. 2<sup>d</sup>. This *Spirit of glory* sets the heart on glory. True glory makes heavenly things excellent in our thoughts, and sets the world, the better and the worse, the honor and the dishonor of it, at a low rate.



The spirit of the world is a base, ignoble spirit, even the highest pitch of it. Their's are but poor designs who are projecting for kingdoms, compared to those of the Christian, which ascend above all things under the sun, and above the sun itself, and therefore he is not shaken with the threats of the world, nor taken with its offers. Excellent is the answer which St. Basil gives, in the person of those martyrs, to that emperor who made them (as he thought) great prof-fers to draw them off: "Why," say they, "dost thou bid us so low as pieces of the world? We have learned to despise it all." This is not stupidity, nor an affected stoutness of spirit, but a humble sublimity, which the natural spirit of a man cannot reach unto.

But wilt thou say still, This stops me, I do not find this Spirit in me: if I did, then I think I could be willing to suffer anything. To this, for the present, I say not more than this: Dost thou desire that Christ may be glorified, and couldst thou be content it were by thy suffering in any kind thou mayest be called to undergo for Him? Art thou willing to give up thy own interest to study and follow Christ's, and to sacrifice thine own credit and name to advance His? Art thou unwilling to do anything that may dishonor Him, but not unwilling to suffer anything that may honor Him? Or wouldst thou be thus? Then, be not disputing, but up and walk on in His strength.

Now, if any say, But His name is dishonored by these reproaches—true, says the Apostle, *on their part it is so, but not on yours*. They that reproach you, do their best to make it reflect on Christ and his cause, but thus it is only *on their part*. You are sufferers for His name, and so you *glorify* it: your faith and patience, and your victory by these, do declare the power of Divine grace, and the efficacy of the Gospel. These have made torturers ashamed, and induced some beholders to share with those who were tortured. Thus, though the profane world intends, as far as it can reach, to fix dishonor upon the profession of Christ, yet it sticks not, but on the contrary, He is glorified by your constancy.

And as the ignominy fastens not, but the glory from the endurance does, so Christians are obliged, and certainly are ready, according to the Apostle's zeal, ver. 16, *to glorify God on this behalf*, that, as He is glorified in them, so they may glory and bless Him who hath dignified them so; that whereas we might have been left to a sad sinking task, to have suffered for various guilts, our God hath changed the tenor and nature of our sufferings, and makes them to be *for the name of Christ*.

Thus, a spiritual mind doth not swell on a conceit of constancy and courage, which is the readiest way of self-undoing, but acknowledges all to be *gift*, even suffering: *To you it is given not only to believe, but to suffer*, and so to *bless Him* on that behalf. Phil i. 29. Oh! this love grows in suffering. See Acts v. 41.

*They went away rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.*

Consider, it is but a short while, and the wicked and their scoffs shall vanish; *they shall not be.* This shame will presently be over, this disgrace is of short date, but the glory, and the *Spirit of glory*, are eternal. What though thou shouldst be poor, and defamed, and despised, and be the common mark of scorn and all injuries, yet the end of them all is at hand. This is now thy part, but the scene shall be changed. Kings here, real ones, are in the deepest reality but stage kings; but when thou comest to alter the person thou now bearest, here is the odds: thou wast a fool in appearance, and for a moment, but thou shalt be truly a king forever.

#### GOD'S TIME AND PURPOSE IN THE AFFLICTIONS OF HIS CHURCH.

For the time is come, that judgment **must** begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?

There is not only perfect equity, but withal, a comely proportion and beauty in all the ways of God, had we eyes opened to discern them, particularly in this point of the sufferings and afflictions of the Church. The Apostle here sets it before his brethren, *For the time is come, &c.* In which words, there is, 1st, A parallel of the Lord's dealing with His own and with the wicked. 2d. A persuasion to due compliance and confidence, on the part of His own, upon that consideration.

The parallel is in the *order* and the *measure* of punishing; and it is so that, for the *order*, it begins at the house of God, and ends upon the ungodly. And that carries in it this great difference in the *measure*, that it passes from the one on whom it begins, and rests on the other on whom it ends, and on whom the full weight of it lies for ever. It is so expressed: *What shall the end be, &c.*, which imports, not only that judgment shall overtake them in the end, but that it shall be their end; they shall end in it, and it shall be endless upon them.

*The time is.*] Indeed, the whole time of this present life is so, is the time of suffering and purifying for the Church, compassed with enemies who will afflict her, and subject to those impurities which need affliction. The Children of God are in their underage here: all their time they are children, and have their frailties and childish follies; and therefore, though they are not always under the stroke of the rod, for that they were not able to endure, yet they are under the discipline and use of the rod all their time. And whereas the wicked escape till their day of full payment, the children of God are in this life chastised with frequent afflictions. And so, *The time* may here be taken according as the

Apostle St. Paul uses the same word, Rom. viii. 18, *The sufferings of this present time.*

But withal, it is true, and appears to be here implied, that there are peculiar set times, which the Lord chooses for the correcting of His Church. He hath the days prefixed and written in His *Ephemerides*, hath His ways of correcting, wherein He goes round from one church to another. We thought it would never come to us, but we have now found the smart of it.

And here the Apostle may probably mean the times of those hot persecutions that were then begun, and continued, though with some intervals, for two or three ages. Thus, in the sixth chapter of the Apocalypse, after the *white horse*, immediately follow at his heels, *the red*, and *the black*, and *the pale horse*. And as it was upon the first publishing of the Gospel, so usually, upon the restoring of it, or upon remarkable reformation of the Church and revivings of religion, follow sharp and searching trials. As the lower cause of this is the rage and malice of Satan, and of the ungodly world acted and stirred by him, against the purity and prevalency of religion, so it is from a higher Hand for better ends. The Lord will discover the multitudes of hypocrites and empty professors, who will at such a time readily abound, when religion is upon an advancing way, and the stream of it runs strong. Now by the counter-current of troubles, such fall back and are carried away. And the truth of grace, in the hearts of believers, receives advantage from these hazards and sufferings; they are put to fasten their hold the better on Christ, to seek more experience of the real and sweet consolations of the Gospel, which may uphold them against the counter-blasts of suffering. Thus is religion made a more real and solid thing in the hearts of true believers: they are entered to that way of receiving Christ and His cross together, that they may see their bargain, and not think it a surprise.

*Judgment.*] Though all her sufferings are not such, yet commonly, there is that unsuitable and unwary walking among Christians, that even their sufferings for the cause of God, though unjust from men, are from God just punishments of their miscarriages towards Him, in their former ways; their self-pleasing and earthliness, having too high a relish for the delights of this world, forgetting their inheritance and home, and conforming themselves to the World, walking too much like it.

*Must begin.*] The Church of God is punished, while the wicked are free and flourish in the world, possibly all their days; or, if judgment reach them here, yet it is later; it *begins at the house of God*. [1.] This holds in those who profess His name, and are of the Visible church, compared with them who are without the pale of it, and are its avowed enemies. [2.] In those who profess a desire of a more religious and holy course of life

within the Church, compared with the profane multitude. [3.] In those who are indeed more spiritual and holy, and come nearer unto God, compared with others who fall short of that measure. In all these respects it holds, that the Lord doth more readily exercise them with afflictions, and correct their wanderings, than any others.

And this truly is most reasonable; and the reason lies in the very name given to the Church, *the House of God*. For,

1. There is *equity* in such a proceeding. The sins of the Church have their peculiar aggravations, which fall not upon others. That which is simply a sin in strangers to God, is, in His people, the breach of a known and received law, and a law daily unfolded and set before them: yea, it is against their oath of allegiance; it is perfidy and breach of covenant, committed both against the clearest light, and the strictest bonds, and the highest mercies. And still the more particular the profession of His name and the testimonies of His love, these make sin the more sinful, and the punishment of it the more reasonable. The sins of the Church are all twice dipped *Dibapha*, have a double dye; Isa. i. 18. They are breaches of the Law, and they are, besides, ungrateful and disloyal breaches of promise.

2. As there is unquestionable *equity*, so there is an evident *congruity* in this. God is ruler of all the world, but particularly of His Church, here called *His House*, wherein he hath a special residence and presence; and therefore it is most suitable that there He be specially observed and obeyed, and if disobeyed, that He take notice of it and punish it; that He suffer not Himself to be dishonored to His face by those of His own House. And therefore, whosoever escapes, His own shall not. *You only have I known, of all the families of the earth: therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities.* Amos iii. 2. It is fit that He who righteously judges and rules all nations should make His justice most evident and exemplary in His own House, where it may best be remarked, and where it will best appear how impartial He is in punishing sin. So a King, (as the Psalmist, Psal. ci. 2,) that he may rule the land well, makes his *own house*, exemplary. It is, you know, one special qualification of a bishop and pastor, to be *one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?* 1 Tim. iii. 4. Now this, therefore, more eminently appears in the Supreme Lord of the Church; He rules it as His own house, and therefore when he finds disobedience there, He will first punish that. So He clears Himself, and the wicked world being afterwards punished, their mouths are stopped with the preceding punishment of the Church. Will He not spare His own? Yea, they shall be first scourged. *What then shall be the end of them that obey not the Gospel?*



And indeed, the purity of His nature, if it be everywhere contrary to all sinful impurity, cannot but most appear in His peculiar dwelling-house; that He will especially have neat and clean. If He hate sin all the world over, where it is nearest to Him He hates it most, and testifies His hatred of it most: He will not endure it in His presence. As cleanly, neat persons cannot well look upon anything that is nasty, much less will they suffer it to come near them, or touch them, or to continue in their presence in the house where they dwell: so the Lord, *who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, will not abide it within His own doors; and the nearer any come to Him, the less can He endure any unholiness or sinful pollution in them. *He will be sanctified in all that come nigh Him*, Lev. x. 3; so especially in His ministers. Oh, how pure ought they to be, and how provoking and hateful to Him are their impurities! Therefore, in that commission to the destroyers, Ezek. ix. 6, to which place the Apostle here may have some reference, *Go*, says He, *slay the old and the young, and begin at My sanctuary*. They were the persons who had polluted His worship, and there the first stroke lighted. And in a spiritual sense, because all His people are His own elect priesthood, and should be *holiness to the Lord*; when they are not really so, and do not sanctify Him in their walking, He sanctifies Himself, and declares His holiness in His judgments on them.

3. There is mercy in this dispensation too; even under the habit of judgment, Love walks secretly and works. So loving and so wise a Father will not undo his children by sparing the rod, but *because he loves, rebukes and chastens*. See Heb. xii. 6. Prov. iii. 11. Apoc. iii. 19. His Church is His house; therefore that He may delight in it, and take pleasure to dwell in it, and make it happy with His presence, He will have it often washed and made clean, and the filth and rubbish scoured and purged out of it; this argues His gracious purpose of abiding in it.

And as He doth it, that He may delight in His people, so He doth it that they may delight in Him, and in Him alone. He embitters the breast of the World, to wean them; makes the World hate them, that they may the more easily hate it; suffers them not to settle upon it, and fall into a complacency with it, but makes it unpleasant to them by many and sharp afflictions, that they may with the more willingness come off and be untied from it, and that they may remember home the more, and seek their comforts above; that finding so little below, they may turn unto Him, and delight themselves in communion with Him. That the sweet incense of their prayers may ascend the more thick, He kindles those fires of trials to them. For though it should not be so, yet so it is, that in times of ease they would easily grow remiss and formal in that duty.

He is gracious and wise, knows what He does with with them, and *the thoughts He thinks towards them*. Jer. xxix. 11. All is for their advantage, for the purifying of their iniquities. Isa. xxvii. 9. He purges out their impatience, and earthliness, and self-will, and carnal security; and thus refines them for vessels of honor. We see in a jeweller's shop, that as there are pearls and diamonds, and other precious stones, so there are files, cutting instruments, and many sharp tools, for their polishing; and while they are in the work-house, they are continual neighbors to them, and often come under them. The Church is God's jewellery, His work-house, where His jewels are a polishing for His palace and house; and those He especially examines and means to make most resplendent, He hath oftenest His tools upon.

Thus observe it, as it is in the church compared to other societies, so is it in a congregation or family; if there be one more diligently seeking after God than the rest, he shall be liable to meet with more trials, and be oftener under afflictions than any of the company, either under contempt and scorn, or poverty and sickness, or some one pressure or other, outward or inward. And those inward trials are the nearest and sharpest which the World sees least, and yet the soul feels most. And yet all these, both outward and inward, have love, unspeakable love in them all, being designed to purge and polish them, and, by the increasing of grace, to fit them for glory.

The end of those that obey not the Gospel.

The end of all the ungodly is terrible, but especially the end of such as heard the Gospel, and have not received and obeyed it.

The word hath in it both unbelief and disobedience; and these are inseparable. Unbelief is the grand point of disobedience in itself, and the spring of all other disobedience; and the pity is, that men will not believe it to be thus.

They think it an easy and a common thing to believe. Who doth not believe? Oh, but rather, who does? *Who hath believed our report?* Were our own misery, and the happiness that is in Christ believed, were the riches of Christ and the love of Christ believed, would not this persuade men to forsake their sins and the world, in order to embrace Him?

But men run away with an extraordinary fancy of believing, and do not deeply consider what news the Gospel brings, and how much it concerns them. Sometimes, it may be, they have a sudden thought of it, and they think, I will think on it better at some other time. But when comes that time? One business steps in after another, and shuffles it out. Men are not at leisure to be saved.

Observe the phrase, *The Gospel of God*. It is His embassy of

peace to men, the riches of His mercy and free love opened and set forth, not simply to be looked upon, but laid hold on; the glorious holy God declaring His design of agreement with man, in His own Son, His blood streaming forth in it to wash away uncleanness. And yet this Gospel is not obeyed! Surely, the conditions of it must be very hard, and the commands intolerably grievous that are not hearkened to. Why, judge you if they be. The great command is, to receive that salvation; and the other is this, to love that Saviour; and there is no more. Perfect obedience is not now the thing; and the obedience which is required, that love makes sweet and easy to us, and acceptable to Him. This is proclaimed to all who hear the Gospel, but the greatest part refuse it: they love themselves, and their lusts, and this present world, and will not change, and so, they perish!

They perish—What is that? What is their end? I will answer that but as the Apostle doth, and that is even by asking the question over again, *What shall be their end?*

There is no speaking of it; a curtain is drawn: silent wonder expresses it best, telling that it cannot be expressed. How then shall it be endured? It is true, that there be resemblances used in Scripture, giving us some glance of it. We hear of a *burning lake, a fire that is not quenched, and a worm that dies not*; Isa. lxvi. 24; Mark ix. 44; Rev. xxi. 8. But these are but shadows to the real misery of them that obey not the Gospel. Oh, to be filled with the wrath of God, the ever-living God, for ever! What words or thoughts can reach it? Oh, eternity, eternity! Oh, that we did believe it.

If the Righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear.

It is true, then, that they are *scarcely saved*; even they who endeavor to walk uprightly in the ways of God, that is, *the righteous*, they are *scarcely saved*. This imports not any uncertainty or hazard in the thing itself as to the end, in respect of the purpose and performance of God, but only, the great difficulties and hard encounters in the way; that they go through so many temptations and tribulations, so many *fightings without and fears within*. The Christian is so simple and weak, and his enemies are so crafty and powerful, the oppositions of the wicked world, their hatreds, and scorns, and molestations, the sleights and violence of Satan, and worst of all, the strength of his own corruptions; and by reason of abounding corruption, there is such frequent, almost continual, need of purifying by afflictions and trials, that he has need to be still under physic, and is of necessity at sometimes drained and brought so low, that there is scarcely strength or life remaining in him.

And, truly, all outward difficulties would be but matter of ease, would be as nothing, were it not for the incumbrance of lusts and corruptions within. Were a man to meet disgraces and sufferings for Christ, how easily would he go through them, yea, and rejoice in them, were he rid of the fretting impatience, the pride, and self-love, of his own carnal heart! These clog and trouble him worst, and he cannot shake them off, nor prevail against them without much pains, many prayers, and tears; and many times, after much wrestling, he scarcely finds that he hath gained any ground: yea, sometimes he is foiled and cast down by them.

And so, in all other duties, such a fighting and continual combat, with a revolting, backsliding heart, the flesh still pulling and dragging downwards! When he would mount up, he finds himself as a bird with a stone tied to its foot; he hath wings that flutter to be upwards, but is pressed down by the weight fastened to him. What struggling with wanderings and deadness in hearing, and reading, and prayer! And what is most grievous is, that, by their unwary walking, and the prevailing of some corruption, they grieve the Spirit of God, and provoke Him to hide His face, and withdraw His comforts. How much pain to attain any thing, any particular grace of humility, or meekness, or self-denial; and if any thing be attained, how hard to keep and maintain it against the contrary party: How often are they driven back to their old point. If they do but cease from striving a little, they are carried back by the stream. And what returns of doubtings and misbelief, after they thought they were got somewhat above them, insomuch that sometimes they are at the point of giving over, and thinking it will never be for them. And yet, through all these they are brought safe home. There is Another strength than theirs which bears them up, and brings them through. But these things, and many more of this nature, argue the difficulty of their course, and that is not so easy a thing to come to Heaven as most imagine it.

*Inference.* Thou that findest so little stop and conflict in it, who goest thy round of external duties, and all is well, art no more troubled; thou hast need to inquire, after a long time spent in this way, Am I right? Have I not yet to begin? Surely, this looks not like the way to Heaven, as it is described in the Scripture: it is too smooth and easy to be right.

And if the way of the righteous be so hard, then how hard shall be the end of the ungodly sinner that walks in sin with delight! It were strange if they should be at such pains, and with great difficulty attain their end, and he should come in amongst them in the end; they were fools indeed. True, if it were so. But what if it be not so? Then the wicked man is the fool, and shall find that he is, when he shall not be able to *stand in judgment*.



Where shall he appear, when to the end he might not appear, he would be glad to be smothered under the weight of the hills and mountains, if they could shelter him from appearing?

And what is the aim of all this which we have spoken, or can speak, on this subject, but that ye may be moved to take into deeper thoughts the concernment of your immortal souls! Oh, that you would be persuaded! Oh, that you would betake yourselves to Jesus Christ, and seek salvation in Him! Seek to be covered with His righteousness, and to be led by His Spirit in the ways of righteousness. That will seal to you the happy certainty of the End, and overcome for you all the difficulties of the Way. What is the Gospel of Christ preached for? What was the blood of Christ shed for? Was it not, that by receiving Him, we might escape condemnation? Nay, this drew Him from heaven: *He came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly.* John x. 10.

#### CONFIDENCE IN GOD AMIDST AFFLICTIONS.

Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

Nothing doth so much establish the mind amidst the rollings and turbulency of present things, as both a look above them, and a look beyond them; above them to the steady and good Hand by which they are ruled, and beyond them to the sweet and beautiful end to which, by that Hand, they shall be brought. This the Apostle lays here as the foundation of that patience and peace in troubles, wherewith he would have his brethren furnished. And thus he closes this chapter in these words: *Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

The words contain the true principle of Christian patience and tranquillity of mind in the sufferings of this life, expressing both wherein it consists, and what are the grounds of it.

I. It lies in this, *committing the soul unto God.* The word which is added, is a true qualification of this, that it be *in well doing*, according to the preceding doctrine, which the Apostle gives clearly and largely, *ver.* 15, 16. If men would have inward peace amidst outward trouble, they must walk by the rule of peace, and keep strictly to it. If you would commit your soul to the keeping of God, know that He is a holy God, and an unholy soul that walks in any way of wickedness, whether known or secret, is no fit commodity to put into His pure hand to keep. Therefore as you would have this confidence to give your holy God the keeping of your soul, and that He may accept of it, and take it off your hand, beware of wilful pollutions and unholy ways. Walk so you may not discredit your Protector, and move

Him to be ashamed of you, and disclaim you. Shall it be said that you live under His shelter, and yet walk inordinately? As that cannot well be, you cannot well believe it to be. Loose ways will loosen your hold of Him, and confidence in Him. You will be driven to question your interest, and to think. Surely I do but delude myself: can I be under His safeguard, and yet follow the course of the world, and my corrupt heart? Certainly, let who will be so, HE will not be a guardian and patron of wickedness. No, *He is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with Him.* Psal. v. 4. If thou give thy soul to Him to keep, upon the terms of liberty to sin, He will turn it out of His doors, and remit it back to thee to look to as thou wilt thyself. Yea, in the ways of sin, thou dost indeed steal it back, and carriest it out from Him; thou puttest thyself out of the compass of His defence, goest without the trenches, and art, at thine own hazard, exposed to armies of mischiefs and miseries.

*Inference.* This, then, is primarily to be looked to: you that would have safety in God, in evil times, beware of evil ways; for in these it cannot be. If you will be safe in Him, you must stay with Him, and in all your ways, keep within Him *as your fortress*. Now, in the ways of sin you run out from Him.

Hence it is we have so little established confidence in God in times of trial. We take ways of our own, and will be gadding, and so we are surprised and taken, as they that are often venturing out into the enemy's reach, and cannot stay within the walls. It is no idle repetition, Psal. xci. 1: *He that dwelleth in the secret places of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.* He that wanders not, but stays there, shall find himself there hidden from danger. They that rove out from God in their ways, are disquieted and tossed with fears; this is the *fruit of their own ways*; but the soul that is indeed given to Him to keep, keeps near Him.

Study pure and holy walking, if you would have your confidence firm, and have boldness and joy in God. You will find that a little sin will shake your trust, and disturb your peace, more than the greatest sufferings: yea, in those sufferings, your assurance and joy in God will grow and abound most if sin be kept out. That is the trouble-feast that disquiets the conscience, which while it continues good, is a *continual feast*. So much sin as gets in, so much peace will go out. Afflictions cannot break in upon it to break it, but sin doth. All the winds which blow about the earth from all points, stir it not; only that within the bowels of it makes the earthquake.

I do not mean that for infirmities a Christian ought to be discouraged. But take heed of walking in any way of sin, for that will unsettle thy confidence. Innocency and holy walking make the soul of a sound constitution, which the counterblasts of afflic-

tion wear not out, nor alter. Sin makes it so sickly and crazy, that it can endure nothing. Therefore, study to keep your consciences pure, and they shall be peaceable, yea, in the worst of times commonly most peaceable and best furnished with spiritual confidence and comfort.

*Commit the keeping of their souls.*] The Lord is an entire protector. He keeps the bodies, yea, all that belongs to the Believer, and, as much as is good for him, makes all safe, *keeps all his bones, not one of them is broken*, Psal. xxxiv. 18; yea, says our Saviour, *The very hairs of your head are numbered*. Matt. x. 30. But that which, as in the Believer's account, and in God's account, so, certainly in itself is most precious, is principally committed and received into His keeping, *their souls*. They would most gladly be secured in that here, and that shall be safe in the midst of all hazards. Their chief concern is, that, whatsoever be lost, this may not: this is the jewel, and therefore the prime care is of this. If the soul be safe, all is well; it is riches enough. *What shall it profit a man, though he gain the whole world*, says our Saviour, *and lose his own soul?* Mark viii. 36. And so, what shall it disprofit a man, though he lose the whole world, if he gain his soul? Nothing at all.

When times of trial come, oh, what a bustle to hide this and that; to flee, and carry away and make safe that which is but trash and rubbish to the precious soul; but how few thoughts of that! Were we in our wits, that would be all at all times, not only in trouble, but in days of peace. Oh, how shall I make sure about my soul? Let all go as it may, can I but be secured and persuaded in that point, I desire no more.

Now, the way in this, *commit them to God*: this many say, but few do. Give them into His hand, *lay them up* there (so the word is,) and they are safe, and may be quiet and composed.

*In patience possess your souls*, says our Saviour, Luke xxiv. 19. Impatient, fretting souls are out of themselves; their owners do not possess them. Now, the way to possess them ourselves in patience, is, thus to commit them to him in confidence; for then only we possess them, when He keeps them. They are easily disquieted and shaken in pieces while they are in our own hands, but in His hand, they are above the reach of dangers and fears.

*Inference.* Learn from hence, what is the proper act of Faith; it rolls the soul over on God, ventures it in His hand, and rests satisfied concerning it, being there. And there is no way but this, to be quiet within, to be impregnable and immovable in all assaults, and fixed in all changes, believing in His free love. Therefore, be persuaded to resolve on that:—not doubting and disputing, Whether shall I believe or not? Shall I think He will suffer me to lay my soul upon Him to keep, so unworthy, so guilty a soul? Were it not presumption!—Oh, what sayest thou?

Why dost thou thus dishonor Him, and disquiet thyself? If thou hast a purpose to walk in any way of wickedness, indeed thou art not for Him; yea, thou comest not near Him to give Him thy soul. But wouldst thou have it delivered from sin, rather than from trouble, yea, rather than from hell? Is that the chief safety thou seekest, to be kept from iniquity, from thine own iniquity, thy beloved sins? Dost thou desire to dwell in Him, and walk with Him? Then, whatsoever be thy guiltiness and unworthiness, come forward, and give Him thy soul to keep. If He should seem to refuse it, press it on Him. If he stretch not forth His hand, lay it down at His foot, and leave it there, and resolve not to take it back. Say, Lord, Thou hast made us these souls, Thou callest for them again to be committed to Thee; here is one. It is unworthy, but what soul is not so? It is most unworthy, but therein will the riches of Thy grace appear most in receiving it. And thus leave it with Him, and know, He will make thee a good account of it. Now, should you lose goods, or credit, or friends, or life itself, it imports not; the main concern is sure, if so be thy soul is out of hazard. *I suffer these things for the Gospel*, says the Apostle: *nevertheless, I am not ashamed—Why?—for I know whom I have trusted, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.* 2 Tim. i. 12.

II. The *Ground* of this confidence, is in these two things, the *ability* and the *fidelity* of Him in whom we trust. There is much in a persuasion of the power of God. Though few think they question that, there is in us secret, undiscovered unbelief, even in that point. Therefore the Lord so often makes mention of it in the Prophets. See Isa. l. 3, &c. And, in this point, the Apostle Paul is particularly express: *I am persuaded that He is able to keep, &c.* So this Apostle: *Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.* Ch i. ver. 5. This is very needful to be considered, in regard of the many and great oppositions, and dangers, and powerful enemies, that seek after our souls: *He is able to keep them, for He is stronger than all, and none can pluck them out of His hand*, says our Saviour. John x. 29. This the Apostle here implies in that word, *Creator*: if He was able to give them being, surely He is able to keep them from perishing. This relation of a Creator, implies likewise a benign propension and good-will to the works of His hands: if He gave them us at first, when once they were not, forming them out of nothing, will He not give us them again, being put into His hand for safety?

And as He is powerful, He is no less faithful, *a faithful Creator*, Truth itself. Those who believe on Him, He never deceives or disappoints. Well might St. Paul say, *I know whom I have trusted.* Oh, the advantage of Faith! It engages the truth and the power of God: His royal word and honor lies upon it, to pre-



serve the soul that Faith gives Him in keeping. If He remain able and faithful to perform His word, that soul shall not perish.

There be in the words, other two grounds of quietness of spirit in sufferings. [1.] It is according to the will of God. The believing soul, subjected and levelled to that will, complying with His good pleasure in all, cannot have a more powerful persuasive than this, that all is ordered by His will. This settled in the heart would settle it much, and make it even in all things; not only to know, but wisely and deeply to consider, that it is thus, that all is measured in Heaven, every drachm of thy troubles weighed by That skillful Hand, which doth all things by weight, number, and measure.

And then, consider Him as thy God and Father, who hath taken special charge of thee, and of thy soul: thou hast given it to Him, and He hath received it. And, upon this consideration, study to follow His will in all, to have no will but His. This is thy duty, and thy wisdom. Nothing is gained by spurning and struggling, but to hurt and vex thyself; but by complying, all is gained—sweet peace. It is the very secret, the mystery of solid peace within, to resign all to His will, to be disposed of at His pleasure, without the least contrary thought. And thus, like two-faced pictures, those sufferings and troubles, and whatsoever else, while beheld on the one side as painful to the flesh, hath an unpleasant visage, yet go about a little, and look upon it as thy Father's will, and then it is smiling, beautiful, and lovely. This I would recommend to you, not only for temporals, as easier there, but in spiritual things, your comforts and sensible enlargements, to love all that He does. It is the sum of Christianity, to have thy will crucified, and the will of thy Lord thy only desire. Whether joy or sorrow, sickness or health, life or death, in all, in all, *Thy will be done.*

The other ground of quietness is contained in the first word, which looks back on the foregoing discourse, *Wherefore*—what? Seeing that your reproachings and sufferings are not endless, yea, that they are short, they shall end, quickly end, and end in glory, be not troubled about them, overlook them. The eye of faith will do it. A moment gone, and what are they? This is the great cause of our disquietness in present troubles and griefs; we forget their end. We are affected by our condition in this present life, as if it were all, and it is nothing. Oh, how quickly shall all the enjoyments, and all the sufferings of this life pass away, and be as if they had not been!

To discourse fitly of Divine things we must be partakers of them.

*A partaker of the glory to be revealed.]* As he was a witness of those sufferings, so a partaker of the glory purchased by those

sufferings; and therefore, as one insighted and interested in what he speaks, the Apostle might fitly speak of that peculiar duty to which those sufferings and that glory do peculiarly persuade. This is the only way of speaking of those things, not as a discourser or contemplative student, but as a *partaker* of them. There is another force in a pastor's exhortation either to his people or his brethren, who brings his message written upon his own heart; who speaks of the guilt of sin, and the sufferings of Christ for it, as particularly feeling his own guilt, and looking on those sufferings, as taking it away; speaks of free grace, as one who either hath drunken of the refreshing streams of it, or at least is earnestly thirsting after it; speaks of the love of Christ, from a heart kindled with it, and of the glory to come, as one who looks to be a sharer in it, and longs earnestly for it, as one who hath all his joy and content laid up in the hopes of it.

And thus with respect to Christians conversing with each other in their mutual exhortings and comfortings, all is cold and dead that flows not from some inward persuasion and experimental knowledge of Divine things. But that gives an edge and a sweetness to Christian conference:—to be speaking of Jesus Christ, not only as a King and as a Redeemer, but as *their* King, and *their* Redeemer, in David's style, *My King and my God*, and of His sufferings as theirs, applied by faith, and acquitting them in St. Paul's style, *Who loved me and gave Himself for me*; to be speaking of the glory to come as *their* inheritance, that of which they are *partakers*, their home; as strangers meeting together abroad, in some foreign country, delight to speak of their own land, their parentage and friends, and the rich patrimony there abiding them. *Peregrinis in terris nulla est jucundior recordatio quam sue civitatis*: Nothing is more delightful, says Augustine, to travellers in distant countries, than the remembrance of their native land. And this ought to be the entertainment of Christians when they meet. Away with trifling vain discourses; cause all to give place to these refreshing remembrances of our home. Were our hearts much on that rich inheritance above, it would be impossible to refrain our tongues, and to pass on so silent concerning it; to find matter of empty pratings, and be pleased with them, and to have no relish of this? Whither go your hearts? They are out of their way, and abase themselves, that turn so much downwards, and are not more above the sun, eyeing still that blessed land where our purchased inheritance lies.

Oh, seek after more clear knowledge of this glory, and of your interest in it, that your hearts may rejoice in the remembrance of it; that it be not to you as the description of a pleasant land, such as men read of in history, and have no portion in: they like it well, and are pleased with it while they read, be it but some imagined country or commonwealth finely fancied. But know this

country of yours to be real, and no device: and seek to know yourselves to be partakers of it.

This confidence depends not upon a singular revelation, but on the power of faith, and the light of the Spirit of God, which clears to His children the things that He hath freely given them; though some of them at times, some, it may be, all, or most of their time, do want it, God so disposing it, that they scarcely clearly see their right, till they be in possession; see not their heaven and home, till they arrive at it, or are hard upon it. Yet, truly, this we may and ought to seek after in humility and submission, that we may have the *pledge and earnest of our inheritance*; not so much for the comfort within us, (though that is allowed,) as that it may wean our hearts from things below, may raise us to higher and closer communion with God, and enable us more for His service, and excite us more to His praises, even here. What were a Christian without the hope of this glory? As one said, *Tolle religionem, et nullas eris: Take away religion, and you take away the man*. And, having this hope, what are all things here to him? How poor and despicable the better and worse of this life, and this life itself! How glad is he that it will quickly end! And what were the length of it to him, but a long continuance of his banishment, a long detainment from his home, and how sweet is the message that is sent for him to come home!

*The glory to be revealed!* It is hidden for the present, wholly unknown to the children of this world, and even but little known to the children of God, who are heirs of it. Yea, they who know themselves *partakers of it*, yet know not much what it is; only this, that it is above all they know or can imagine. They may see things which make a great show here; they may hear of more than they see; they may think or imagine more than either they hear or see, or can distinctly conceive of; but still they must think of this glory as beyond it all. If I see pompous shows, or read or hear of them, yet this I say of them, 'These are not as my inheritance: Oh! it is far beyond them. Yea, does my mind imagine things far beyond them, golden mountains and marble palaces, yet those fall short of my inheritance, for it is such, *as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive*. Oh, the brightness of that glory when it shall be revealed! How shall they be astonished, who shall see it, and not partake of it! How shall they be filled with everlasting joy, who are heirs of it! Were the heart much upon the thoughts of that glory, what thing is there in this perishing world, which could either lift it up or cast it down?

Manner in which we ought to hear the Word of God.

Inquire of your own hearts, and see what you seek, and what you find, in the public ordinances of God's house. Certainly,

the most do not so much as think on the due design of them ; they aim at no end, and therefore can attain none ; they seek nothing, but sit out their hour, asleep or awake, as it may happen. Or, possibly, some seek to be delighted for the time, as the Lord tells the Prophet, to hear, *as it were, a pleasant song*. Ezek. xxxiii. 32, if the gifts and strain of the speaker be anything pleasing. Or, it may be, they seek to gain some new notions, to add somewhat to their stock of knowledge, either that they may be enabled for discourse, or, simply, that they may know. Some, it may be, go a little further ; they like to be stirred and moved for the time, and to have some touch of good affection kindled in them : but this lasts but *for a while*, till their other thoughts and affairs get in, and smother and quench it ; they are not careful to blow it up and improve it. How many, when they have been a little affected with the word, go out and fall into other discourses and thoughts : they either take in their affairs secretly, as it were under their cloak, and their hearts keep up a conference with them, or, if they forbear this, yet, as soon as they go out, they plunge themselves over head and ears in the world, and lose all which might have any way advantaged their spiritual condition. It may be, one will say, It was a good sermon. Is that to the purpose ? But what think you it hath for your praise or dispraise ? Instead of saying, Oh, how well was that spoken ! you should say, Oh, how hard is repentance ! how sweet a thing is faith ! how excellent the love of Jesus Christ ! That were your best and most real commendation of the sermon, with true benefit to yourselves.

If some of you be careful of repeating, yet, rest not on that : if you be able to speak of it afterwards upon occasion, there is somewhat requisite beside and beyond this, to evidence that you are indeed fed by the word, as the flock of God. As when sheep, you know, or other creatures, are nourished by their pasture, the food they have eaten appears, not in the same fashion upon them, not in grass, but in growth of flesh and fleece ; thus the word would truly appear to feed you, not by the bare discoursing of the word over again, but by the temper of your spirits and actions, if in them you really grow more spiritual, if humility, self-denial, charity, and holiness, are increased in you by it ; otherwise, whatsoever literal knowledge you attain, it avails you nothing. Though you heard many sermons every day, and attained further light by them, and carried a plausible profession of religion, yet, unless by the Gospel you be transformed into the likeness of Christ, and grace be indeed growing in you, you are but, as one says of the cypress-trees, fair and tall, but fruitless.

Are you not grieved and afraid, or may not many of you be so, who have lived many years under a fruitful ministry, and yet are as earthly and selfish, as unacquainted with God and His ways, as



at the first? Consider this, that as the neglect of souls will lie heavy on unholy or negligent ministers, so, a great many souls are ruining themselves under some measure of fit means, and the slighting of those means will make their condition far heavier than that of many others. Remember our Saviour's word: *Woe to thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.* Matt. xi. 21.

Motives that ought to actuate the Minister of the Gospel.

There be three evils the Apostle would remove from this work, *constrainedness*, *covetousness*, and *ambition*, as opposed to *willingness*, a *ready mind*, and an exemplary temper and behavior.

1. We are cautioned against *constrainedness*, against being driven to the work by necessity, indigence, and want of other means of subsistence, as it is with too many; making a trade of it to live by, and setting to it as to any other calling for that end; yea, making it the refuge and forlorn resource of their insufficiency for other callings. And as men are not to undertake the work, driven to it by that hard weapon of necessity, so, being engaged in it, they are not to discharge the duties of it merely upon necessity, because of fines binding to it, or for fear of censure: this is a violent forced motion, and cannot but be both very unpleasant and unprofitable, as to the proper end and profiting of this work. And as the principle of the motion in this service should not be a compelling necessity of any kind, but true *willingness of heart*, so this willingness should not arise from any thing but pure affection to the work.

2. Not *for filthy gain*, but purely from the inward bent of the mind. As it should not be a compulsive or violent motion by necessity from without, so it should not be an artificial motion by weights hung on within—avarice and love of gain. The former were a wheel, driven or drawn, going by force; the latter, little better, as a clock made to go by art, by weights hung to it. But there should be a natural motion, like that of the heavens in their course. A willing obedience to the Spirit of God within, moving a man in every part of this holy work, that is, his mind carried to it as the thing he delights in, and in which he loves to be exercised. So, Timothy *careth* not artificially, but naturally. Phil. ii 20. There may be in a faithful pastor very great reluctance in engaging and adhering to the work, upon a sense of the excellency of it and his own unfitness, and the deep apprehension of those high interests, the glory of God, and the salvation of souls; and yet, he may enter into it, and continue in it, with this *readiness of mind* too; that is, with most single and earnest desires of doing all he can for God, and *the flock of God*; only grieved that there

is in him so little suitableness of heart, so little holiness and acquaintance with God for enabling him to it. But might he find that, he were satisfied; and, in expectation of that, he goes on, and waits, and is doing according to his little skill and strength, and cannot leave it. He is *constrained* indeed, but all the constraint is that of *love to Jesus*, and, for His sake, to the souls he hath bought; (2 Cor. v. 14;) and all the *gain* sought, is, to *gain* souls to Christ; which is far different from the constraint and the gain here prohibited; yea, this is indeed that very willingness and readiness of mind which is opposed to that other constraint. That is without; this is within: that other gain, is base filthy gain, this noble and divine.

*Inf.* 1. Far be it from us, that necessity and constraint should be the thing that moves us in so holy a work. The Lord whom we serve, sees into the heart, and if He find not that primarily moving, accounts all our diligence nothing. And let not base earth within be the cause of our willingness, but a mind touched with heaven. It is true, the temptations of earth with us, in the matter of gain, are not great; but yet, the heart may cleave to them, as much as if they were much greater, and if it do cleave to them, they shall ruin us; as well a poor stipend and glebe, if the affection be upon them, as a great deanery or bishopric. If a man fall into it, he may drown in a small brook, being under water, as well as in the great ocean. Oh, the little time that remains! Let us join our desires and endeavours in this work, bend our united strength to serve Him, that we may have joy in that day of reckoning.

And, indeed, there is nothing moves us aright, nor shall we ever find comfort in this service, unless it be from a cheerful inward *readiness of mind*, and that from the *love of Christ*. Thus said He to His Apostle, *Lovest thou me? Then feed my sheep and feed my lambs.* John xxi. 16. Love to Christ begets love to His people's souls, which are so precious to Him, and a care of feeding them. He devotes the working of love towards Him, upon his flock, for their good, puts them in His room, to receive the benefit of our services, which cannot reach Him considered in Himself: He can receive no other profit from it. Love, much love, gives much unwearied care and much skill in this charge. How sweet is it to him that loves, to bestow himself, *to spend and be spent*, upon his service whom he loves! Jacob, in the same kind of service, endured all that was imposed on him, and found it light by reason of love, the cold of the nights, and heat of the days: seven years he served for his Rachel, *and they seemed to him but a few days, because he loved her.* Gen. xxix. 20.

Love is the great endowment of a shepherd of Christ's flock. He says not to Peter, Art thou wise, or learned, or eloquent? but, *Lovest thou me? Then feed my sheep.*

3. The third evil is ambition, and that is either in the affecting of undue authority, or the overstrained and tyrannical exercise of due authority, or to seek those dignities that suit not with this charge, which is not *dominium*, but *ministerium*. This temper, therefore, is forbidden, Luke xxii. 25, 26: *The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, but ye shall not be so.* There is a ministerial authority to be used in discipline, and more sharpness with some than with others; but still, lowliness and moderation must be predominant, and not domineering with rigour; rather being examples to the flock in all holiness, and especially in humility and meekness, wherein our Lord Jesus particularly propounds His own example: *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.*

#### HUMILITY.

Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

Sin hath disordered all; so that nothing is to be found but disorder and crookedness in the condition and ways of men towards God, and towards one another, till a new Spirit come in and rectify all. And very much of that redress lies in this particular grace of *humility*, here recommended by the Apostle.

That grace regulates the carriage, 1. Of the *younger* towards the *elder*. 2. Of all men *one to another*. 3. Of all towards God.

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The presumption and unbridledness of youth require the pressing and binding on of this rule. And it is of undeniable equity, even written in nature, as due to aged persons. But, doubtless, those reap this due fruit in that season the most, who have ripened it most by the influence of their grave and holy carriage. *The hoary head is indeed a crown*,—but when?—*when found in the way of righteousness.* Prov. xvi. 31. There it shines, and hath a kind of royalty over youth; otherwise, a graceless old age is a most despicable and lamentable sight. What gains an unholy old man or woman, by their scores of years, but the more scores of guiltiness and misery? And their white hairs speak nothing but ripeness for wrath. Oh! to be as *a tree planted in the house of the Lord, bringing forth fruit in old age.* Psal. xcii. 12, 13. Much experience in the ways of God, and much disdain of the world, and much desire of the love of God, a heavenly temper of mind and frame of life; this is the advantage of many years. But to have seen and felt the more misery, and *heaped up* the more sin, the greater bundle of it *against the day of wrath*, a woful treasure of it, threescore, or threescore and ten years a gathering,

and with so much increase every day ; no vacation, no dead years, no, not a day wherein it was not growing ; how deplorable a case !

A sad reflection, to look back and think, What have I done for God ? and to find nothing but such a world of sin, committed against Him ! How much better he who gets home betimes in his youth, if once delivered from sin and death, at one with God, and some way serviceable to Him, or desiring to be so, and who hath a quick voyage, having lived much in a little time !

2. *All of you be subject one to another.* This yet further dilates the duty, makes it universally mutual : *one subject to another.* This directly turns about the vain contest of men, that arises from the natural mischief of self-love. Every one would carry it, and be best and highest. The very company of Christ, and His exemplary lowliness, and the meanness of Himself and these His followers, all these did not bar out this frothy foolish question, *Who shall be the greatest ?* And so far it was disputed, that it occasioned heat about it, *a strife amongst them.* Luke xxii. 24. Now, this rule is just opposite : each is to strive to be lowest, *subject one to another.*

This doth not annul either civil or church government, nor those differences that are grounded upon the law of nature, or of civil society ; for we see immediately before, that such differences are allowed, and the particular duties of them recommended ; but it only requires that all due respect, according to their station, be given by each Christian to another. And though there cannot be such a subjection of masters or parents to their servants and children, as is due to them, from these, yet, a lowly, meek carrying of their authority, a tender respect of their youth, the receiving of an admonition from them duly qualified, is that which suits with the rule ; and, in general, not delighting in the trampling on, or abusing of any, but rather seeking the credit and good esteem of all as our own ; taking notice of that good in them, wherein they are beyond us : (for all have some advantage, and none hath all ; ) and, in a word, (and it is the precept of St. Paul, like this of our Apostle here,) *In honor preferring one another,* Rom. xii. 10, *q. d.* : Let this be all the strife, who shall put most respect each on another, according to the capacity and station of every one : *in giving honor, go each one before another.*

Now, that such carriage may be sincere, no empty compliment, or court holy water, (as they speak,) but a part of the solid holiness of a Christian, the Apostle requires the true principle of such deportment, the grace of *humility*, that a Christian *put on that* ; not the appearance of it, to act in as a stage-garment, but the truth of it, as their constant habit. *Be ye clothed with humility.* It must appear in your outward carriage ; so the resemblance of clothing imports. But let it appear as really it is ; so the very



name of it imports. It is not a *show of humility*, but heart-lowliness, *humility of mind*.

As it is the bent of humility to hide other graces, so far as piety to God and our brethren will permit, so, it would willingly hide itself; it loves not to appear but as necessity urges. Appear it must, and it doth somewhat more appear than many other graces do, though it seeks not to appear. It is seen as a modest man or woman's apparel, which they wear not for the end that it may be seen; they do not gaudily flaunt and delight in dressing: though there is a decency as well as necessity, which they do and may have respect to, yet it is in so neat and unaffected a way, that they are a good example even in that point. Thus, humility in a carriage and words, is as the decorum of this clothing, but the main is the real usefulness of it.

And therefore, a truly humble man desires not much to appear humble. Yea, were it not for disedifying his brethren, he would rather disguise and hide, not only other things by humility, but even humility itself, and would be content, upon the mistake of some words or gestures, to pass for proud and vain, being humble within, rather than to be big in his own eyes, under a semblance of outward lowliness. Yea, were it not that charity and piety do both forbid it, he would not care to do some things on purpose that might seem arrogant, to carry humility unseen, that doth so naturally delight in covering all graces, and is sorry that it cannot do so without being seen itself, as that garment that covers the rest, must of necessity be seen itself. But seeing it must be so, it is with the least show that may be, as a dark veil cast about rich attire, hides their show, and makes very little itself.

This, therefore, is mainly to be studied, that the seat of humility be *the heart*. Although it will be seen in the carriage, yet as little as it can; as few words as may be concerning itself; and those it doth speak, must be the real thoughts of the mind, and not an affected voice of it differing from the inward sense: otherwise, humble speech and carriage only put on without, and not fastened in the inside, is the most refined and subtle, and indeed the most dangerous kind of pride. And this I would recommend as a safe way: Ever let thy thoughts concerning thyself be below what thou utterest: and what thou seest needful or fitting to say to thine own abasement, be not only content (which most are not) to be taken at thy word, and believed to be such by them that hear thee, but be desirous of it, and let that be the end of thy speech, to persuade them, and gain it of them, that they really take thee for as worthless and mean as thou dost express thyself.

*Infer.* But how little are we acquainted with the real frame of Christianity, the most living without a rule, not laying it to their words and ways at all, nor yielding so much as seeming obedience to the Gospel; while others take up a kind of profession, and

think all consists in some religious performances, and do not study the inward reserve of their heart-evils, nor labor to have that temple purged: for the heart should be a temple, and it stands in much need of a sweeping out of the filthiness, and putting out of idols. Some there be, who are much busied about the matter of their assurance, still upon that point, which it is lawful indeed, and laudable to inquire after, yet not so as to neglect other things more needful. It were certainly better for many, when they find no issue that way, to turn somewhat of their diligence to the study of Christian graces and duties in their station, and to task themselves for a time, were it to the more special seeking, first, of some one grace, and then, of another, as meekness, and patience, and this particularly of humility. To be truly heart-humble—many men despise it in others; but some that will commend it in the general, or in some of those in whom they behold it, yet seek not to *put it on* themselves. They love to be more gay, and to seem to be somebody, and not to abase themselves. It is the way, say they, to be undone. This clothing is too poor a stuff, and too sad a color for them. Oh, my brethren, you know not the excellency of it. Ye look out at a distance and judge according to your light vain minds. But will you see it by the light of the word, and then you shall perceive much hidden richness and comeliness in it. And do not only approve it, and call it comely on others, but put it on, and so, it is most comely. And as it is with respect to all graces, so, particularly, as to this clothing of humility, though it make least shew, yet, come near, and you will see it both rich and comely; and though it hides other graces, yet, when they do appear under it, as sometimes they will, a little glance of them so, makes them much more esteemed. Rebecca's beauty and her jewels were covered with a veil, but when they did appear, the veil set them off, and commended them, though at a distance it hid them.

Again: As in all graces, so, particularly in this grace, take heed of a disguise or counterfeit of it. Oh, for sincerity in all things, and particularly in this! To be low in thine own eyes, and willing to be so in the eyes of others, this is the very upright nature of heart-humility. 1st. Not to be deluded with a false conceit of advantages thou hast not. 2dly. Not to be swelled with a vain conceit of those thou really hast. 3dly. Not affecting to be esteemed by others, either upon their imagining thee to have some good that is not in thee, or discerning that which is. Is not the day at hand, when men will be taken off the false heights they stand on, and set on their own feet; when all the esteem of others shall vanish and pass away like smoke, and thou shalt be just what God finds and accounts thee, and neither more nor less? Oh! the remembrance of that day when a true estimate will be made of all, this would make men hang less upon the unstable

conceits and opinions of one another, knowing our judgment and day shall shortly end. Be it little or much that thou hast, the lower and closer thou carriest it under this cloak, the safer shall it and thou be, the more shall it increase, and thou shalt be the liker Him in whom *all fulness dwells*. In this He hath most expressly set Himself before us as our pattern; and one says well, "Surely, man might now be constrained to be proud, for whom God Himself became humble."

Now, to work the heart to an humble posture, I. Look *into thyself* in earnest: and, truly, whosoever thou be that hast the highest conceit of thyself, and the highest causes for it, a real sight of thyself will lay thy crest. Men look on any good, or any fancy of it, in themselves, with both eyes, and skip over as unpleasant their real defects and deformities. Every man is naturally his own flatterer; otherwise, flatteries, and false cryings up from others, would make little impression; but hence their success, they meet with the same conceit within. But let any man see his ignorance, and lay what he knows not over against what he knows; the disorders in his heart and affections, over against any right motion in them; his secret follies and sins, against his outwardly blameless carriage,—this man shall not readily love and embrace himself; yea, it shall be impossible for him not to abase and abhor himself.

2. Look on the good in others, and the evil in thyself: make that the parallel, and then thou wilt walk humbly. Most men do just the contrary, and that foolish and unjust comparison puffs them up.

3. Thou art not required to be ignorant of that good which really is so indeed; but beware of imagining *that* to be good which is not; yea, rather let something that is truly good pass thy view, and see it within, rather than beyond its true size. And then, whatsoever it be, see it not as thine own, but as God's, His free gift; and so, the more thou hast, looking on it in that view, thou wilt certainly be the more humble, as having the more obligations: the weight of them will press thee down, and lay thee still lower, as you see it in Abraham,—the clear visions and promises he had made him fall down flat to the ground. Gen. xv. 12.

4. Pray much for the spirit of humility, the Spirit of Christ, for that is it; otherwise, all thy vileness will not humble thee. When men hear of this or of other graces, and how reasonable they are, they think presently to have them, and do not consider that natural enmity and rebellion of their own hearts, and the necessity of receiving them from heaven. And therefore, in the use of all other means, be most dependent on that influence, and most in the use of that means which opens the heart most to that influence, and draws it down upon the heart, and that is Prayer.

Of all the evils of our corrupt nature, there is none more



connatural than universal pride, the grand wickedness, self-exalting in our own and other's opinion. Though I will not contest what was the first step in that complicated first sin, yet certainly this of pride was one, and a main ingredient in it,—that which the unbelief conceived going before, and the disobedience following after, were both servants too; and ever since, it sticks still deep in our nature. St. Augustine says truly, *That which first overcame man, is the last thing he overcomes.* Some sins, comparatively, may die before us, but this hath life in it, sensibly as long as we. It is the heart of all, the first living, and the last dying; and it hath this advantage, that, whereas other sins are fomented by one another, this feeds even on virtues and graces as a moth that breeds in them, and consumes them, even in the finest of them, if it be not carefully looked to. This hydra, as one head of it is cut off, another rises up. It will secretly cleave to the best actions, and prey upon them. And therefore is there so much need that we continually watch, and fight, and pray against it, and be restless in the pursuit of real and deep humiliation, daily seeking to advance further in it; to be nothing, and to desire to be nothing; not only to bear, but to love our own abasement, and the things that procure and help it, to take pleasure in them, so far as may be without sin: yea, even in respect of our sinful failings, when they are discovered, to love the bringing low of ourselves by them, while we hate, and grieve for the sin of them.

And, above all, it is requisite to watch ourselves in our best things, that self get not in, or, if it break in, or steal in at any time, that it be presently found out and cast out again; to have that established within us, to do all for God, to intend Him and His glory in all, and to be willing to advance His glory, were it by our own disgrace: not to make raising or pleasing thyself the rule of exercising thy parts and graces, when thou art called to use and bring them forth, but the good of thy brethren, and in that, the glory of thy Lord. Now, this is indeed to be severed from self and united to Him, to have self-love turned into the love of God. And this is his own work: it is above all other hands: therefore, the main combat against pride, and the conquest of it, and the gaining of humility, is certainly by prayer. God bestows Himself upon them who are most abundant in prayer; and they to whom He shews Himself most are certainly the most humble.

Now, to stir us up to diligence in the exercise of this grace, take briefly a consideration or two.

1. Look on that above pointed at, the high example of lowliness set before us: Jesus Christ requiring our particular care to take this lesson from Him. And is it not most reasonable? He the most fair, the most excellent and complete of all men, and yet the most humble! He more than a man, who yet willingly became, in some sort, less than a man, as it is expressed, Psal. xxii. 6, a



*worm and no man.* And when Majesty itself *emptied itself*, and descended so low, shall a worm swell and be high-conceited?

Then, consider, it was for *us* He humbled Himself, to expiate our pride; and therefore it is evidently the more just that we follow a pattern which is both so great in itself, and doth so nearly concern us. O humility, the virtue of Christ, (that which he so peculiarly espoused,) how dost thou confound the vanity of our pride!

2. Consider the safety of Grace under this clothing: it is that which keeps it unexposed to a thousand hazards. Humility doth Grace no prejudice in covering it, but indeed shelters it from violence and wrong: therefore they do justly call it *conservatrix virtutum*, the preserver of graces: and one says well, "That he who carries other graces without humility, carries a precious powder in the wind without a cover."

3. Consider the increase of grace by it, as here expressed; the perfect enmity of God against pride, and His bounty towards humility. *He resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

*God resisteth the proud*, singles it out for His grand enemy, and sets Himself in battle array against it: so the word is. It breaks the ranks of men in which He hath set them, when they are not subject, as the word is before: yea, Pride not only breaks rank, but rises up in rebellion against God, and doth what it can to dethrone him and usurp His place: therefore he orders His forces against it. And to be sure, if God be able to make his party good, Pride shall not escape ruin. He will break it, and bring it low: for He is set upon that purpose, and will not be diverted.

*But he giveth grace*,—pours it out plentifully upon humble hearts. His sweet dews and showers of grace, slide off the mountains of pride, and fall on the low valleys of humble hearts, and make them pleasant and fertile. The swelling heart, puffed up with a fancy of fulness, hath no room for grace. It is lifted up, is not hallowed and fitted to receive and contain the graces that descend from above. And again, as the humble heart is most capacious, and, as being emptied and hallowed, can hold most, so it is the most thankful, acknowledges all as received, while the proud cries out that all is his own. The return of glory that is due from Grace, comes most freely and plentifully from an humble heart: God delights to enrich it with grace, and it delights to return Him glory. The more He bestows on it, the more it desires to honor Him with all; and the more it doth so, the more readily he bestows still more upon it; and this is the sweet intercourse betwixt God and the humble soul. This is the noble ambition of humility, in respect whereof all the aspirings of pride are low and base. When all is reckoned, the lowliest mind is truly the highest; and these two agree so well, that the more lowly it is, it is thus the higher; and the higher thus, it is still the more lowly.

Oh, my brethren, want of this is a great cause of all our wants. Why should our God bestow on us what we would bestow on our idol, self? Or, if not to idolize thyself, yet to idolize the thing, the gift that Grace bestowed, to fetch thy believing and comforts from that, which is to put it in His place who gave, and to *make Baal of it*, as some would render Hosea, ii. 8.\* Now He will not furnish thee thus to His own prejudice therein. Seek, therefore, to have thy heart on a high design, seeking grace still, not to rest in any gift, nor to grow vain and regardless of Him upon it. If we had but this fixed with us—What gift or grace I seek, what comfort I seek, it shall be no sooner mine, but it shall be all Thine again, and myself with it; I desire nothing from Thee, but that it may come back to Thee, and draw me with it unto Thee; this is all my end, and all my desire:—the request thus presented would not come back so often unanswered.

This is the only way to grow quickly rich: come still poor to Him who hath enough ever to enrich thee, and desire of His riches, not for thyself, but for Him. Mind entirely His glory in all thou hast and seekest to have. What thou hast, use so, and what thou wantest, vow that thou wilt use it so: let it be His in thy purpose, even before it be thine in possession, as Hannah did in her suit for a son; 1 Sam. i. 11: and thou shalt obtain it as she did. And then, as she was, be thou faithful in the performance: *Him whom I received*, (says she) *by petition, I have returned to the Lord*.

It is undoubtedly the secret pride and selfishness of our hearts, that obstruct much of the bounty of God's hand in the measure of our graces, and the sweet embraces of His love, which we should otherwise find. The more that we let go of ourselves, still the more should we receive of Himself. Oh, foolish we, who refuse so blessed an exchange!

To this humility, as in these words it is taken in the notion of our inward thoughts touching ourselves, and our carriage in relation to others, the Apostle joins the utter humility in relation to God; being indeed the different actings of one and the same grace, and inseparably connected each with the other.

#### SUBMISSION.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.

This is pressed by a reason both of equity and necessity, in that word, *The mighty hand of God*. He is Sovereign Lord of all, and all things do obeisance to Him; therefore, it is *just*, that you His people, professing loyalty and obedience to Him, be most submissive and humble in your subjection to Him in all things.

\* The words *Gnasu Lebegnol*, which we render *which they prepared for Baal*, may, as the margin notes, be translated *wherewith they made Baal*.—(Dr. Doddridge.)

Again, mark *the necessity, His mighty hand*: there is no striving, it is a vain thing to flinch and struggle, for He doth what He will. And His hand is so mighty, that the greatest power of the creature is nothing to it. Yea, it is all indeed derived from Him, and therefore cannot do any whit against Him. If thou wilt not yield, thou must yield: if thou wilt not be led, thou shalt be pulled and drawn. Therefore, submission is your only course.

A third reason by which this duty is pressed, is that of utility, or the certain advantage of it. As there is nothing to be gained, yea, rather, as you are certainly ruined by reluctance, so this humble submission is the only way to gain your point. What would you have under any affliction, but be delivered, and raised up? Thus alone can you attain that: *Humble yourselves, and He shall raise you up in due time.*

This is the end why He humbles you: He lays weights upon you, that you may be depressed. Now, when this end is gained, that you are willingly so, then the weights are taken off, and you are lifted up by His gracious hand. Otherwise, it is not enough, that he hath humbled you by His hand, unless you *humble yourselves*, under His hand. Many have had great and many pressures, one affliction after another, and been humbled, and yet not made humble, as they commonly express the difference: humbled by force in regard of their outward condition, but not humbled in their inward temper; and therefore, as soon as the weight is off, like heaps of wool, they rise up again, and grow as big as they were.

If we would consider this in our particular trials, and aim at this deportment, it were our wisdom. Are they not mad, who, under any stroke, quarrel or struggle against God? What gain your children thus at your hands, but more blows? Nor is this only an unseemly and unhappy way, openly to resist and strive, but even secretly to fret and grumble; for He hears the least whispering of the heart, and looks most how that behaves itself under His hand. Oh, humble acceptance of His chastisement, is our duty and our peace; that which gains most on the heart of our Father, and makes the rod fall soonest out of His hand.

And not only should we learn this in our outward things, but in our spiritual condition, as the thing the Lord is much pleased with in His children. There is a stubbornness and fretting of heart concerning our souls, that arises from pride and the untamedness of our nature; and yet some take a pleasure in it, touching the matter of comfort and assurance, if it be withheld. Or, (which they take more liberty in,) if it be sanctification and victory over sin they seek, and yet find little or no success, but the Lord holding them under in these, they then vex themselves, and wax more discontented, and nothing pleases them: as peevish children, upon the refusal of somewhat they would have, take displeasure, and make

no account of the daily provision made for them, and all the other benefits they have by the care and love of their parents. This is a folly very unbeseeming the children that are the *children of wisdom*, and should walk as such : and till they learn more humble respect for their Father's will, they are still the farther off from their purpose. Were they once brought to submit the matter, and give Him heartily His will, He would readily give them theirs, as far as it were for their good : as you say to your children, of anything they are too stiff and earnest in, and make a noise for, "Cry not for it, and you shall have it."

And this is the thing we observe not, that the Lord often by His delays, is aiming at this ; and were this done, we cannot think how graciously He would deal with us. His gracious design is, to make much room for grace by much humbling : especially in some spirits which need much trying, or when He means much to enable for some singular service. And thus, the time is not lost, as we are apt to imagine, but it furthers our end, while we think the contrary. It is necessary time and pains that are given to the unballasting of a ship, the casting out of the earth and sand, when it is to be laden with spices. We must be emptied more, if we would have more of that fulness and riches which we are longing for.

So long as we fume and chafe against His way, though it be in our best supplications, we are not in a posture for a favorable answer. Would we wring things out of His hand by fretfulness ? That is not the way : no ; but present humble submissive suits : Lord, this is my desire, but Thou art wise and gracious ; I refer the matter to Thy will for the thing, and for the measure, and for the time, and all. Were we moulded to this composure, then were mercy near. When He hath gained this, broken our will and tamed our stoutness, then He relents and pities. See Jer. xxx. 17, 18. *Because they called thee an outcast, &c., thus saith the Lord, behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, &c.*

This I would recommend in any estate, the humble folding under the Lord's hand, kissing the rod, and falling low before Him ; and this is the way to be raised. But there may be some one who thinks he hath tried this awhile, and is still at the same point, hath gained nothing, and he may therefore be ready to fall back to his old repinings : let such a one know that his humbling and compliance were not upright ; it was a fit of false, constrained submission, and therefore lasts not : it was but a tempting of God, instead of submitting to Him. "Oh, will He have a submission ? I will try it, but with this reserve, that if after such a time I gain not what I seek, I shall think it is lost, and that I have reason to return to my discontent." Though the man says not thus, yet this meaning is secretly under it. But wouldst thou have it right, it must be without condition, without reserve ; no time, nor anything,



prescribed : and then He will make his word good, *He will raise thee up*, and that

*In due time.* Not thy fancied time, but His own wisely appointed time. Thou thinkest, Now I am sinking ; If He help not now, it will be too late. Yet He sees it otherwise : He can let thee sink still lower, and yet bring thee up again. He doth but stay till the most fit time. Thou canst not see it now, but thou shalt see it, that His chosen time is absolutely best. *God waiteth to be gracious.* Isa. xxx. 18. Doth He wait, and wilt not thou ? Oh, the firm belief of His wisdom, power, and goodness, what difficulty will it not surmount ? So then, be humble under His hand. Submit not only thy goods, thy health, thy life, but thy soul. Seek and wait for thy pardon as a condemned rebel, with thy rope about thy neck. Lay thyself low before Him, stoop at His feet, and crave leave to look up, and speak, and say—Lord, I am justly under the sentence of death : if I fall under it, Thou art righteous, and I do here acknowledge it ; but there is deliverance in Christ, thither I would have recourse : yet, if I be beaten back, and kept out, and faith withheld from me, and I perish, as it were, in view of salvation ; if I see the rock, and yet cannot come at it, but drown ; what have I to say ? In this, likewise, thou art righteous. Only, if it seem good unto thee to save the vilest, most wretched of sinners, and to show great mercy in pardoning so great debts, the higher will be the glory of that mercy. However, here I am resolved to wait, till either Thou graciously receive me, or absolutely reject me. If Thou do this, I have not a word to say against it ; but because Thou art gracious, I hope, I hope Thou wilt yet have mercy on me.—I dare say that the promise in the text belongs to such a soul, and *it shall be raised up in due time.*

And what though most, or all of our life, should pass without much sensible taste even of spiritual comforts, a poor all it is ! Let us not over-estimate this *moment*, and so think too much of our better or worse condition in it, either in temporals, or even in spirituals, so far as regards such things as are more arbitrary and accessory to the name of our spiritual life. Provided we can humbly wait for free grace, and depend on the word of promise, we are safe. If the Lord will clearly shine on us, and refresh us, this is much to be desired and prized ; but if He so think fit, what if we should be all our days held at a distance, and under a cloud of wrath ? It is but *a moment in His anger* ; Psal. xxx. 5. Then follows a life-time in His favor, an endless life-time. It is but *weeping* (as it there follows) *for a night, and joy comes in the morning*, that clearer morning of Eternity, to which no evening succeeds.

## TRUST IN DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

Casting all your care on Him, for He careth for you.

Amongst other spiritual secrets, this is one, and a prime one, the combination of lowliness and boldness, *humble confidence*: this is the true temper of a child of God towards his great and good Father; nor can any have it, but they who are indeed His children, and have within them that *spirit of adoption* which He sends into their hearts. Gal. iv. 6.

And these two the Apostle here joins together: *Humble yourselves under the hand of God*, and yet *Cast your care on Him*: upon that same Hand under which you ought to humble yourselves, must you withal cast over your care, all your care; *for He careth for you*.

Consider, I. The Nature of this Confidence, *Casting all your care on Him*. II. The Ground or warrant of it, *For He careth for you*.

I. For the Nature of it. Every man hath some desires and purposes that are predominant with him, besides those that relate to the daily exigencies of life with which he is compassed: and in both, according to their importance or his estimate of them, and the difficulties occurring in them, he is naturally carried to be proportionally thoughtful and careful in them. Now, the excess and distemper of this care, is one of the great diseases and miseries of man's life. Moral men, perceiving and feeling it, have been tampering at the cure, and prescribing after their fashion, but with little success. Some present abatement and allay of the paroxysm or extremity, their rules may reach: but they never go near the bottom, the cause of the evil, and therefore cannot work a thorough sound cure of it. Something they have spoken, somewhat fitly, of the surpassing of nature's rule and size in the pursuit of superfluous, needless things; but, for the unavoidable care of things needful, they know no redress, but refer men entirely to their own industry and diligence. They can tell how little will serve him who seeks no more than what will serve, but how to be provided with that little, or to be assured of it, and freed from troubling care, they cannot tell.

Now, truly it were a great point, to be well instructed in the former; and it is necessary for the due practice of the rule here given, touching necessary cares, first to cut off cares unnecessary, to retrench all extravagant, superfluous desires. For, certainly, a great part of the troublous cares of men, relate merely to such things as have no other necessity in them, than what our disordered desires create, nor truly any real good in them, but what our fancy puts upon them. Some are indeed forced to labor hard for their daily bread; but undoubtedly, a great deal of the sweat and toil of the greatest part of men is about unecessaries: *ad*

*supervacua sudatur.* Such an estate, so much by the year, such a place, so much honor, and esteem, and rank in the world,—these are the things that make some slaves to the humors of others, whom they court, and place their dependence on, for these ends: and those, possibly, to whom they are so enthralled, are themselves at as little liberty, but captivated to the humors of some others, either above them, or who being below them, may give accession and furtherance to their ends of enrichment, advancement, or popularity. Men who are set on these things, forge necessities to themselves, and make vain things as necessary food and raiment, resolving that they will have them, or fall in the chase, being wilfully and unavoidably bent on them. *They that will be rich*, says the Apostle (1 Tim. vi. 9,) who are resolved on it upon any terms, meet with terms hard enough,—*they fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.* Drown them: there is no recovering, but still they are plunged deeper and deeper. *Foolish lusts*; unreasonable, childish desires: after one bargain, such another, and after one sin, another to make even, and somewhat then to keep that whole, and so on without end. If their hearts are set upon purchase and land, still some house or neighbor-field, some *Naboth's vineyard* is in their eyes, and all the rest is nothing without that, which discovers the madness of this humor, this dropsy-thirst.

And this is the first thing, indeed, to be looked to, that our desires and cares be brought to a due compass. And what would we have? Think we that contentment lies in so much, and no less? When that is attained, it shall appear as far off as before. When children are at the foot of a high hill, they think it reaches the heavens, and yet, if they were there, they would find themselves as far off as before, or at least not sensibly nearer. Men think, Oh, had I this, I were well; and when it is reached, it is but an advanced standing from which to look higher, and spy out for some other thing.

We are indeed children in this, to think the good of our estate lies in the greatness, and not in the fitness of it for us. He were a fool that would have his clothes so, and think the bigger and longer they were, they would please him the better. And certainly, as in apparel, so in place and estate, and all outward things, their good lies not in their greatness, but in their fitness for us. Our Saviour tells us expressly, that *man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth.* Luke xii. 13. Think you that great and rich persons live more content? Believe it not. If they will deal freely, they can tell you the contrary; that there is nothing but a shew in them, and that great estates and places have great grief and cares attending them, as shadows are proportioned to their bodies. And if they have no real crosses, luxury frames troubles to itself; like a variety of dishes corrupt-

ing the stomach, and causing variety of diseases. And instead of need, they have fantastic vain discontents that will trouble men as much as greater, be it but this hawk flies not well, or that dog runs not well, to men whose hearts are in those games.

So then, I say, this is first to be regulated : all childish, vain, needless cares are to be discharged, and, as being unfit to cast on thy God, are to be quite cast out of thy heart. Entertain no care at all but such as thou mayst put into God's hands, and make His on thy behalf ; such as He will take off thy hand, and undertake for thee.

All needful lawful care, and that only, will He receive. So then, rid thyself quite of all that thou canst not take this course with, and then, without scruple, take confidently this course with all the rest. Seek a well-regulated, sober spirit. In the things of this life, *be content with food and raiment* ; not delicates, but *food* ; not ornament, but *raiment* ; and conclude, that what thy Father carves to thee is best for thee, the fittest measure, for He knows it, and loves thee wisely. This course our Saviour would have thee take, Matt. vi. 31 ; first, to cut off superfluous care, then, to turn over on thy God the care of what is necessary. He will look to that, thou hast Him engaged ; and He can and will give thee beyond that, if He sees it fit.

Only, this is required of thee, to refer the matter to His discretion entirely. Now, in thy thus well-regulated affairs and desires, there is a diligent care and study of thy duty ; this He lays on thee. There is a care of support in the work, and of the success of it ; this thou oughtest to lay on Him. And so, indeed, all the care is turned off from thee upon Him, even that of duty, which from Him lies on us. We offer our service, but for skill and strength to discharge it, that care we lay on Him, and He allows us to do so ; and then, for the event and success, with that we trust Him entirely. And this is the way to walk contentedly and cheerfully homewards, leaning and resting all the way on Him, who is both our *guide* and our *strength*, who hath us and all our good in His gracious hand. Much zeal for Him, and desire of His glory, minding our duty in relation to that, is the thing He requires, and while we are bending our whole care to that, He undertakes the care of us and our condition : as that king said to his favorite, when persuading him to fidelity and diligence in his state trust, "Do my affairs, and I will do yours." Such a word directly hath St. Chrysostom : If thou have a concern for the things that are God's, He will also be careful with thee and thine.

The care of duty thus carried, is sweet and light, doth not cut and divide the mind : it is united and gathered in God, and rests there, and walks in His hand all the way. He bears the weight of all our works, and *works them in us*, and for us ; and therein lies our peace, that *He ordains for us*. Isa. xxvi. 12. If thou



wouldst shake off the yoke of obedience, thou art likewise to be shaken off thyself; but if, in humble diligence in the ways of God, thou walk on in His strength, there is nothing that concerns thee and thy work, but He will take the charge and care of, thyself and all thine interests. Art thou troubled with fears, enemies, and snares? Untrouble thyself of that, for He is with thee. He hath promised to *lead thee in a straight and safe path*, Psal. xxvii. 11; and to rebuke all thine enemies, to *subdue thine iniquities for thee*, Micah vii. 19; and to *fight against those that fight against thee*, Psal. xxxv. 1. *No weapon formed against thee shall prosper*, Isa. liv. 17; *yea, when thou passest through the water, and through the fire, He will be with thee*, Isa. xliii. 2. Doth thine own weakness discourage thee? Hath He not engaged for that too? So lay over that care upon Him. Hath He not spoken of *strengthening the weak hands and feeble knees*, and said, *that the lame shall leap as an hart*? Isa. xxxv. 3, 6. And though there is nothing in thyself but unrighteousness and weakness, yet there is in Him for thee, *righteousness and strength*, Isa. xlv. 24,—*righteousness*, to express the abundance of righteousness. When thou art ready to faint, a look to Him will revive thee; a believing look draws in of His strength to thy soul, and renews it. Isa. xl. 29. And know, the more tender and weak thou art, the more tender He is over thee, and the more strong will He be in thee. *He feeds His flock like a shepherd*, and the weakest He is the most careful of: *they are carried in His arms and His bosom*, Isa. xl. 11, and it is easy for the feeblest to go so.

And as for the issue and success of thy way, let not that trouble thee at all: that is the care He would have thee wholly disburden thyself of, and lay entirely upon Him. Do not vex thyself with thinking, how will this and that be, what if this and the other fall out. That is His part wholly, and if thou meddle with it, thou at once displeasest Him, and disquietest thyself. This sin carries the punishment of it close tied to it. If thou wilt be struggling with that which belongs not to thee, and poising at that burden that is not thine, what wonder, yea, I may say, what pity if thou fall under it? Art thou not well served? Is it not just, that if thou wilt do for thyself, and bear for thyself, what thy Lord calls for to bear for thee, thou shouldst feel the weight of it to thy cost?

But what is the way of this devolving of my burden? There is a faculty in it that all persons have not: though they would do thus with it, they cannot; it lies on them, and they are not able to cast it on God. The way is, doubtless, by praying and believing: these are the hands by which the soul can turn over to God what itself cannot bear: all cares, the whole bundle, is most dexterously transferred thus. *Be careful in nothing*: Phil. iv. 6. A great word! Oh, but how shall it be? Why thus, says he, *In all things make your requests known unto God*, and in a confident

cheerful way, *supplication* mixed with *thanksgiving*; so shall it be the more lively and active to carry forth, and carry up thy cares, and discharge thee of them, and lay them on God. What soever it is that presses thee, go tell thy Father; put over the matter into His hand, and so thou shalt be freed from that dividing, perplexing care, that the world is full of.

No more, but when thou art either to do or suffer any thing, when thou art about any purpose or business, go tell God of it, and acquaint Him with it; yea, burden Him with it, and thou hast done for matter of caring; no more care, but quiet, sweet diligence in thy duty, and dependence on Him for the carriage of thy matters. And in this prayer, Faith acts: it is a believing requesting. *Ask in faith, not doubting*, Jam. i. 6. So thou rollest over all on Him; that is the very proper working of faith, the carrying the soul, and all its desires, out of itself unto God, as expressed Psal. xxxvi. 5: *Roll over on God*,—make one bundle of all; roll thy cares, and thyself with them, as one burden, all on thy God.

Now Faith, to do this, stays itself on the promise. It cannot move but on firm ground, and the promises are its ground; and for this end is this added, *He careth for thee*.

This must be established in the heart. 1. The firm belief of the Divine Providence, that all things are managed and ruled by it, and that in the highest power and wisdom; that there is no breaking of His purposes, nor resisting of His power. *The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, and the thoughts of His heart to all generations*. Psal. xxxiii. 11. 2. The belief of His gracious Providence to his own people, that He orders all for their true advantage, and makes all different lines and ways con-centre in their highest good; all to meet in that, how opposite soever in appearance. See Rom. viii. 28. 3. A particular confidence of His good-will towards thee, and undertaking for thee. Now, if this be the question, the promise resolves thee: trust Him, and He takes on the trust, and there is no other condition; cast on Him thy care, and He takes it on, He cares for thee. His royal word is engaged not to give thee the slip, if thou do really lay it upon him. *Cast thy burden upon the Lord*, Psal. lv. 22;—hand it over, heave it upon Him,—and *He shall sustain thee*; shall bear both, if thou trust him with both, both thee and thy burden: *He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved*.

*Inf. 1.* The children of God have the only sweet life. The world thinks not so, rather looks on them as poor, discontented, lowering creatures; but it sees not what an uncaring, truly secure life they are called to. While others are turmoiling and wrestling, each with his projects and burdens for himself, and are at length crushed and sinking under them, (for that is the end of all that do for themselves,) the child of God goes free from the pressure of all that concerns him, it being laid over on his God. If he use

his advantage, he is not racked with musings, Oh! what will become of this and that; but goes on in the strength of his God as he may, offers up poor, but sincere endeavors to God, and is sure of one thing, that all shall be well. He lays his affairs and himself on God, and so hath no pressing care: no care but the care of love, how to please, how to honor his Lord. And in this, too, he depends on Him, both for skill and strength; and touching the success of things, he leaves that as none of his to be burdened with, casts it on God, and since he careth for it, they need not both care, His care alone is sufficient. Hence springs peace, inconceivable peace. *Be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Jesus Christ.* Phil. iv. 6, 7.

*Inf. 2.* But truly, the godly are much wanting to themselves, by not improving this their privilege. They too often forget this their sweet way, and fret themselves to no purpose; they wrestle with their burdens themselves, and do not entirely and freely roll them over on God. They are surcharged with them, and He calls for them, and yet they will not give them Him. They think to spare Him, but indeed, in this, they disobey, and dishonor, and so grieve Him: and they find the grief return on themselves, and yet cannot learn to be wise.

Why deal we thus with our God and with our souls, grieving both at once? Let it never be, that for any outward thing thou perplex thyself, and ravel thy thoughts, as in thickets, with the cares of this life. Oh, how unsuitable are these to a child of God, for whom a life so far more excellent is provided? Hath He prepared a kingdom for thee, and will He not bestow thy charges in the way to it? Think it not: *He knoweth you have need of these things.* Matt. vi. 32. Seek not vain things nor great things: for these, it is likely, are not fit for thee; but seek what is needful and convenient in His judgment, and refer thyself to that.

Then, as for thy spiritual estate, lay over upon God the care of that too. Be not so much in thorow questionings, doubting and disputing at every step, Oh, is this accepted, and that accepted, and, So much deadness! &c.; but apply thyself more simply to thy duty. Lamely as it may be, halt on, and believe that He is gracious and pities thee, and lay the care of bringing thee through upon Him. Lie not complaining and arguing, but *up and be doing, and the Lord shall be with thee.* 1 Chron. xxii. 16. I am persuaded that many a soul that hath some truth of grace, falls much behind in the progress, by this accustomed way of endless questionings. Men can scarcely be brought to examine and suspect their own condition, being carnally secure, and satisfied that

all is well ; but then, when once they awaken and set to this, they are ready to entangle themselves in it, and neglect their way, by poring on their condition. They will not set cheerfully to any thing, because they want assurances and height of joy ; and this course they take is the way to want it still. Walking humbly and sincerely, and offering at thy duty, and waiting on the Lord, is certainly the better way, and nearer that very purpose of thine ; for *He meeteth him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember Him in His ways*, Isa. lxiv. 5. One thing the Christian should endeavour to obtain, firm belief for the Church : all the care of that must be cast on God, that *He will beautify Zion*, and perform all His word to her. And then think, Do I trust Him for the whole Church, and the great affairs concerning it, and shall I doubt Him for myself, or any thing that concerns me ! Do I confide in Him for the steering and guidance of the whole ship, and shall I be peevishly doubting and distrusting about my pack in it ?

Again, when in addition to the present and the past, thou callest in after evils by advance, and art still revolving the dangers before, and thy weakness. It is good, indeed, to entertain by these, holy fears and self-distrust ; but by that, be driven in to trust on Him who undertakes for thee, on Him in whom thy strength lies, and be as sure and confident in Him, as thou art, and justly art, distrustful of thyself.

Further, learn to proscribe nothing. Study entire resignation, for that is thy great duty and thy peace : that gives up all into the hand of thy Lord, and can it be in a better hand ! First, refer the carving of outward things to Him, heartily and fully. Then, stay not there, but go higher. If we have renounced the comforts of this world for God, let us add this, renounce even spiritual comforts for Him too. Put all in His will : If I be in light, blessed be Thou ; and if in darkness, even then, blessed be Thou too. As He saith of earthly treasures, *Gold is mine, and silver is mine*,—(and this may satisfy a Christian in those two, to desire no more of them than his Father sees fit to give, knowing that He, having all the mines and treasures of the world at His command, would not pinch and hold short His children, if it were good for them to have more ;) even thus it is in respect to the other, the true riches : Is not the Spirit mine, may God say, and all comforts mine ? I have them to bestow, and enough of them. And ought not this to allay thy afflicting care, and to quiet thy repinings, and establish thy heart, in referring it to His disposal, as touching thy comforts and supplies ? The whole golden mines of all spiritual comfort and good are His, and the Spirit itself. Then, will He not furnish what is fit for thee, if thou humbly attend on Him, and lay the care of providing for thee upon His wisdom and love ? This were the sure way to honor Him with what we have, and



to obtain much of what we have not ; for certainly He deals best with those that do most absolutely refer all to Him.

Be sober, be vigilant.

The children of God, if they rightly take their Father's mind, are always disburdened of perplexing carefulness, but never exempted from diligent watchfulness. Thus we find here, they are allowed, yea, enjoined, to cast all their care upon their wise and loving Father, and are secured by His care. He takes it well that they lay all over on Him, yea, He takes it not well when they forbear Him, and burden themselves. He hath provided a sweet quiet life for them, could they improve and use it ; a calm and firm condition in all the storms and troubles that are about them ; however things go, to find content, and *be careful for nothing*.

Now, upon this, a carnal heart would imagine straight, according to its sense and inclination,—as it desires to have it, so would it dream that it is,—that then, a man devolving his care on God, may give up all watch and ward, and needs not apply himself to any kind of duty. But this is the ignorant and perverse mistake, the reasonless reasoning of the flesh. You see these are here joined, not only as agreeable, but indeed inseparable : *Cast all your care on Him, for He careth for you*, and withal, *Be sober, be vigilant*.

And this is the Scripture logic. *It is He that worketh in you to will and to do*. Phil. ii. 13.—Then, would you possibly think, I need not work at all, or, if I do, it may be very easily and securely. No :—*therefore*, says the Apostle, because He worketh in you to will and to do, *work out your salvation*, yea, and do it *with fear and trembling* ; work you in humble obedience to His command, and in dependence on Him who *worketh all in you*.

Thus, here. *Cast your care on Him*, not that you may be the more free to take your own pleasure and slothful ease, but, on the contrary, that you may be the more active and apt to watch : being freed from the burden of vexing carefulness, which would press and incumber you, you are the more nimble, as one eased of a load, to walk, and work, and watch as becomes a Christian. And for this very purpose is that burden taken off from you, that you may be more able and disposed for every duty that is laid upon you.

Observe these two as connected, and thence gather, *First*, There is no right believing without diligence and watchfulness joined with it. That slothful reliance of most souls on blind thoughts of mercy will undo them : their faith is *a dead faith*, and a deadly faith ; they are perishing and will not consider it. Such persons do not duly cast their care on God for their souls, for indeed they have no such care. *Secondly*, There is no right diligence without believing.

There is, as in other affairs, so, even in spiritual things, an anxious perplexing care, which is a distemper and disturbance to the soul : it seems to have a heat of zeal and affection in it, but is, indeed, not the natural right heat that is healthful, and enables for action, but a diseased, feverish heat, that puts all out of frame, and unfits for duty. It seems to stir and further, but indeed it hinders, and does not hasten us, but so as to make us stumble : as if there was one behind a man, driving and thrusting him forward, and not suffering him to set and order his steps in his course, this were the ready way, instead of advancing him, to weary him, and possibly give him a fall.

Such is the distrustful care that many have in their spiritual course : they raise a hundred questions about the way of their performances, and their acceptance, and their estate, and the issue of their endeavors. Indeed, we should endeavor to do all by our rule, and to walk exactly, and examine our ways : especially in holy things, to seek some insight and faculty in their performance, suiting their nature and end, and His greatness and purity whom we worship. This should be minded diligently, and yet calmly and composedly ; for diffident doubtings do retard and disorder all. But quiet stayedness of heart on God, dependence on Him, on His strength for performance, and His free love in Christ for acceptance, this makes the work go kindly and sweetly on, makes it pleasing to God, and refreshing to thy soul.

*Inf.* Certainly, thou art a vexation to thyself, and displeasest thy Lord, when thou art questioning whether thou shalt go on or not, from finding in thy service so much deadness and hardness ; thinking, therefore, that it were as good to do nothing, that thou dost but dishonor Him in all. Now, thou considerest not, that in these very thoughts thou dost more wrong and dishonor Him than in thy worst services ; for thou callest in question His lenity and goodness, takest Him for a rigorous exacter, yea, representest Him to thyself as a hard master, who is the most gentle and gracious of all masters. Do not use Him so. Indeed, thou oughtest to *take heed to thy foot*, to see how thy heart is affected in His worship. Keep and watch it as thou canst, but in doing so, or in endeavoring to do, however thou find it, do not think He will use rigors with thee ; but the more thou observest thine own miscarriages towards Him, the less severely will He observe them. To think otherwise, to fret and repine that thy heart is not to His mind, nor indeed to thine own, to go on in a discontented impatience, this is certainly not the commanded watchfulness, but that forbidden carefulness.

*Be Sober.*] This we have formerly spoken of, the Apostle having formerly exhorted to it once and again in this Epistle. It were easy to entertain men's minds with new discourse, if our task were rather to please than to profit ; for there be many things

which, with little labor, might be brought forth as new and strange to ordinary hearers. But there be a few things which chiefly concern us to know and practise, and these are to be more frequently represented and pressed. This Apostle, and other inspired writers, drew from too full a spring to be ebb of matter ; but they rather chose profitable iterations, than unprofitable variety ; and so ought we.

This Sobriety is not only temperance in meat and drink, but in all things that concern the flesh. Even that of diet is, though not all, yet a very considerable part of it ; and this not only hath implied in it, that one exceed not in the quantity or quality, but even requires a regulating of ourselves in the manner of using our repast ; that as we are not to make careful and studious provision, or to take up our thoughts how to please our palate, so, even in the use of sober, mean diet, we endeavor the mortifying of our flesh, not to eat and drink merely to please ourselves, or to satisfy our natural desire, but for God ; even to propound this in our sitting down to it, in obedience to Him ; to use these helps of life, and the life itself, to be spent in His obedience, and in endeavoring to advance His glory.

It is a most shameful idol, a dunghill-god indeed, to serve the belly, and to delight in feastings, or in our ordinary repast, laying the reins loose on our appetite to take its own career. And yet, in this, men most commonly offend, even persons that are not notably intemperate, neither gluttonous nor drunken, and yet, I say, have not that holy, retained, bridled way of using their repast, with an eye upon a higher end.

But this Sobriety, in its ample sense, binds not only that sense of lust, but all the rest in the use of their several delights, yea, and in the whole man, all the affections of the soul, in relation to this world, and the things of it : we are to be in it as weaned from it, and raised above it in the bent of our minds ; *to use it as if we used it not.* 1 Cor. vii. 31.

This we speak and hear of, but do not apply ourselves really to this rule. Each hath some trifle or earthly vanity, one or more, but especially some choice one, that he cannot be taken off from ; as children readily have some toy that they set more by than the rest. We have childish hearts cleaving to vanity ; one hankering after some preferment, another after some estate, lands, or houses, or money. And we are drunk in the pursuit of these, so that when our hearts should be fixed on Divine exercises, they cannot stand, but reel to and fro, or stumble down and fall asleep, roving after those thoughts of that which we affect, staggering ever and anon, or else, so plunged in them all the time, that we are as asleep in them.

Therefore, these two are here, and ordinarily, joined, *Be sober and watchful* Glutting ourselves either with the delights, or



with the desires and cares of earth, makes us sleepy : the fumes that arise from them surcharge us, and cast us into a deep sleep, —a secure unminding of God and of ourselves, the interest of our immortal souls.

The pleasures of sense are too gross for the Divine soul. Divine, I call it, for so by original it is ; but we abase it, and make it flesh by those gross earthly things, and make it unfit to rise heavenwards. As insobriety, intemperance in diet, prejudices, the very natural spirits, making them dull, clogs their passage, and makes them move as a coach in a miry way, thus doth all inordinate use and love of inferior things : it makes the soul of a low, heavy constitution, so that it cannot move freely in any thing that is spiritual. Yea, where there is some truth of grace, yet it is obstructed and dulled by taking in too much of the world, and feeding on it ; which is no more proper for the finest part of the man, for the soul, than the coarse ploughman's diet is for delicate, tender bodies of higher breeding ; yea, the disproportion is far greater.

If, then, you would have free spirits for spiritual things, keep them at a spare diet in all things temporal. Let not out your hearts to any thing here below. Learn to delight in God, and seek to taste of His transcendent sweetness : that will perfectly disrelish all lower delights. So your sobriety in abstaining from them shall be still further recompensed with more enjoyment of God, and you shall not lose pleasure by denying yourself the pleasures of earth, but shall change them for those that are unspeakably better and purer in their stead. He shall communicate Himself unto you, the *light of whose countenance* feeds and satisfies the glorified spirits that are about His throne.

*Be vigilant.*] This watchfulness, joined with sobriety, extends to all the estates and ways of a Christian, being surrounded with hazards and snares. *He that despiseth His way shall die*, says Solomon, Prov. xix. 16. The most do thus walk at random : they give attendance on public worship, and have some customary way of private prayer, but do not further regard how they walk, what is their carriage all the day long, what they speak, how they are in company, and how alone, which way their hearts go early and late, what it is that steals away most of their affection from God.

Oh, my beloved, did we know our continual danger, it would shake us out of this miserable dead security that possesses us. We think not on it, but there are snares laid for us all the way, in every path we walk in, and every step of it ; in our meat and drink ; in our calling and labor ; in our house at home ; in our journeying abroad ; yea, even in God's house, and in our spiritual exercises, both there and in private. Knew we, or at least, considered we this, we should choose our steps more exactly, and look to our ways, to our words, to our thoughts, which truly,



whatsoever noise we make, we really do not. *Ponder the path of thy feet*, says Solomon; and before that, *Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.* And further, *Put away a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.* But, first of all, as the main reason and spring of all, *Keep thy heart with all diligence, or above all keeping, for out of it are the issues of life.* Prov. iv. 23—26.

Because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.

An alarm to watchfulness is here given, from the watchfulness of our grand Adversary. There be other two usually ranked with him, as the leading enemies of our souls, the World and our own flesh; but here, he is expressly named, who commands in chief, and orders and manages the war, using the service of the other two against us, as prime officers, under which most of the forces of particular temptations are ranked. Some others there be which he immediately commands and leads on himself, a regiment of his own, some spiritual temptations.

And we have need to be put in mind of the hostility and practices of Satan against us; for if the most were put to it, they would be forced to confess that they very seldom think on their spiritual danger from this hand. As we keep loose guard against the allurements of the world, and of our own corruption, so we watch not against the devices of Satan, but go on by guess, and suspect nothing and so are easily a prey to all.

The least enemy being despised and neglected, as men observe, proves often too great. The smallest appearances of evil, the least things that may prejudice our spiritual good, while we make no reckoning of them, may do us great mischief. Our not considering them makes them become considerable, especially being under the command of a vigilant and skilful leader, who knows how to improve advantages. Therefore, in things which we many times account petty, and not worthy our notice as having any evil in them, we should learn to suspect the address of this adversary, who usually hides himself, and couches under some covert, till he may appear irresistible, and seize on us; and then, indeed, he roars.

And this seeking the destruction of souls is, you see, marked as all his work. The prey he hunts is souls, that they may be as miserable as himself. Therefore he is justly called *our adversary*, the enemy of holiness and of our souls; first tempting to sin, and then accusing for sin, as his name here imports; appearing against us upon the advantages he hath gained. He studies our nature, and fits his temptations to it; knows the prevalency of lust, or earthliness, or that great and most general evil of pride, so like him-

self, and that is his throne in the heart. Sometimes *he boweth down*, as it is said of the lion, Psal. x. 9; he waits his opportunity craftily, and then assaults fiercely. And the children of God find sometimes so much violence in his temptations, that they surprise them; such horrid thoughts cast in as poisoned arrows, or *fiery darts*, as the Apostle speaks, Eph. vi. 16. And this his enmity, though it is against man in general, yet is most enraged against the children of God. He goes about and spies where they are weakest, and amongst them, directs his attacks most against those who are most advanced in holiness, and nearest unto God. They were once under his power, and now being escaped from him, he pursues them, as Pharaoh did the Israelites, with all his forces, raging and roaring after them, as a prey that was once in his den, and under his paw, and now is rescued.

The resemblance hath in it, his strength, his diligence, and his cruelty. His strength, *a lion*; his diligence, *going about and seeking*; his cruelty, *roaring*, and *seeking to devour*.

*Inf.* Is it not most reasonable hence to press watchfulness; to keep continual watch, to see what comes in, and what goes out; to try what is under every offer of the world, every motion of our own natural hearts, whether there be not some treachery, some secret intelligence or not? Especially after a time of some special seasons of grace, and some special new supplies of grace, received in such seasons, (as after the holy sacrament,) then will he set on most eagerly, when he knows of the richest booty. The pirates that let the ships pass as they go by empty, watch them well when they return richly laden: so doth this great Pirate. Did he not assault our Saviour straight after His baptism? Matt. iv. 3.

And, that we may *watch*, it concerns us *to be sober*. The instruction is military: a drunken soldier is not fit to be on the watch. This, most of us are, with our several fancies and vanities, and so exposed to this Adversary. And when we have gained some advantage in a conflict, or when the enemy seems to retire and be gone, yet, even then, are we to be watchful, yea, then especially. How many, presuming on false safeties that way, and sitting down to carouse, or lying down to sleep, have been re-assaulted and cut off! *Invadunt urbem somno vinoque sepultam*. Oh, beware when you think yourselves most safe! That very thought makes you least safe. Keep always your spirits free from surcharges, and lavish profusion upon the world; keep from applying your hearts to anything in it, sitting down to it. Oh! no. Be like Gideon's army, fit to follow God, and to be victorious in Him, not lying down to drink, but taking of it only as for necessity, in passing. Take our Saviour's own word, *Take heed lest at any time your hearts be surcharged with surfeittings and drunkenness, and the cares of this life*. Luke xxi. 34. These will *overcharge* you and make you drunk, and cast you asleep.

Oh, mind your work, and your warfare always, more than your ease and pleasure ! Seek it not here ; your rest is not here. Oh, poor short rest, if it were ! But follow the Lord Jesus through conflicts and sufferings. A little while, and you shall have certain victory, and after it everlasting triumph, rest and pleasure, and a feast that shall not end, where there is no danger either of surfeiting or of wearying, but pure and perpetual delight. In this persuasion, you should be abstinent and watchful, and *endure hardship, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ*, as the Apostle speaks, *2 Tim. xi. 4, not entangling yourselves with the affairs of this life*, and thus be ready for encounters. Stand watching, and, if you be assaulted, *resist*.

#### Steadfastness of Faith.

[*Whom resist, steadfast in the faith.*] To watchfulness courage should be joined. He that watches and yields, seems rather to watch to receive, than resist the enemy.

And this resistance should be continued even against multiplied assaults : for thou hast to deal with an enemy that will not easily give over, but will try several ways, and will redouble his onsets ; sometimes very thick, to weary thee out, sometimes after a little forbearance interposed, to catch thee unawares, when he is not expected. But in all, faint not, but be steadfast in thy resistance.

This is easily said, say you, but how may it be ? How shall I be able so to do ? Thus :

[*Steadfast in the faith.*] The most of men are under the power of one of these two evils, security or distrust ; and out of the one we readily fall into the other. Therefore the Apostle frames his exhortations, and the arguments in support of it, in opposition to both these ; first, against security in the former verse, *Be sober and watch*, and presses that by the proper argument of great and continuing danger ; here against distrust, *Whom resist, steadfast in the faith*, and he adds an encouraging consideration of the common condition of the children of God in the world. *Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren.*

[*Steadfast or solid by faith.*] This is absolutely necessary for resistance. A man cannot fight upon a quagmire ; there is no standing out without a standing, some firm ground to tread upon ; and this Faith alone furnishes. It lifts the soul up to the firm advanced ground of the promises, and fastens it there ; and there it is sure, even as *Mount Zion, that cannot be removed*. He says not, *steadfast by your own resolutions and purposes*, but *steadfast by faith*. The power of God, by faith becomes ours ; for that is contained and engaged in the word of promise. Faith lays hold there, and there finds Almighty strength. *And this is our victory*, says the Apostle St. John, *whereby we overcome the world, even our faith.* 1 John v. 4.



So faith is our victory, whereby we overcome *the prince of this world*. *Whom resist, steadfast in the faith*. And, universally, all difficulties, and all enemies, are overcome by *faith*. Faith sets the stronger *Lion of the tribe of Judah*, against this *roaring lion* of the bottomless pit; that delivering Lion, against this devouring lion.

When the soul is surrounded with enemies on all hands, so that there is no way of escape, Faith flies above them, and carries up the soul to take refuge in Christ, and is there safe. That is the power of Faith; it sets a soul in Christ, and there it looks down upon all temptations as at the bottom of the rock, breaking themselves into foam. When the floods of temptation rise and gather, so great and so many, that the soul is even ready to be swallowed up, then, by faith, it says, Lord Jesus, thou art my strength, I look to thee for deliverance; now appear for my help! And thus it overcomes. The guilt of sin is answered by His blood, the power of sin is conquered by His Spirit; and afflictions that arise are nothing to these; His love and gracious presence make them sweet and easy.

We mistake, if we think to do anything, or to be anything without Him; and we mistake again, if we think anything too hard to be done or suffered with Him. *Without me ye can do nothing*, says He, John xv. 5; and *I am able to do all things*, says the Apostle, or *can all things*, (so the word is) *through Christ that strengthens me*. Phil. iv. 13. All things! Oh, that is a big word, yet it is a true word; and thus made good—through Christ empowering me; that frees it both from falsehood and vanity. An humble confidence, for it is not in himself, but in Christ; and this boasting is good. *My soul shall make her boast in God*, says David, Psal. xxxiv. 2. Oh, they alone have warrant to boast and to triumph, even before the victory, who do it in this style! Such may give a challenge to all the world, to all adverse powers of Earth and Hell, as the Apostle doth in his own and every believer's name, Rom. viii. 35, 38: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* &c. See the victory recorded in this same way, Apoc. xii. 11: *And they overcame him—but how?—by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony*. That Blood, and the word of their testimony, believing that word concerning that Blood, these are the strength and victory of a Christian.

*Inf.* Although, then, thou seest thyself the most witless and weak, and findest thyself nothing but a prey to the powers of darkness, yet know that, by believing, the wisdom and strength of Christ are thine. Thou art and oughtest to find thyself, all weakness; but he is all strength, Almightyness itself. Learn to apply His victory, and so it is thine. Be strong—how?—*In Him, and the power of His might*. But thou wilt say, I am often foiled, yea, I cannot find that I prevail at all against mine enemies, but they



still against me. Yet rely on Him : He can turn the chase in an instant. Still cleave to Him. When the whole powers of thy soul are, as it were, scattered and routed, rally them by believing, Draw thou but unto the standard of Jesus Christ, and the day shall be thine ; for victory follows that standard, and cannot be severed from it. Yea, though thou find the smart of divers strokes, yet, think that often a wounded soldier, hath won the day. Believe, and it shall be so with thee.

And remember that thy defeats, through the wisdom and love of thy God, may be ordered to advance the victory ; to put courage and holy anger into thee against thine enemies ; to humble thee, and drive thee from thine own imagined strength, to make use of His real strength. And be not hasty ; think not at the very first to conquer. Many a hard conflict must thou resolve upon, and often shalt thou be brought very low, almost to a desperate point to thy sense, past recovery ; then it is His time to step in, even in the midst of their prevailing. *Let God but arise, and His enemies shall be scattered.* Psal lxxviii. 1. Thus the Church hath found it in her greatest extremities, and thus likewise the believing soul.

*Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.*] There is one thing that much troubles the patience, and weakens the faith, of some Christians ; they are ready to think there is no one, yea that there never was any one beloved of God, in such a condition as theirs. Thus sometimes they swell even their outward trials in imagination, but oftener their inward ones, which are most heavy and pressing to themselves, and the parallel of them in others least discernable by them. Therefore the Apostle St. Paul breaks this conceit, 1 Cor. x. 13. *No temptation hath taken you, but such as is common to men.* And here is the same truth *The same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren.*

But we had rather hear of ease, and cannot, after all that is said, bring our hearts to comply with this, that temptations and troubles are the saints' portion here, and that this is the royal way to the Kingdom. Our King led in it, and all His followers go the same way ; and besides the happy end of it, is it not sweet, even for this, simply, because He went in it ! Yet, this is the truth, and, taken altogether, is a most conformable truth : the whole brotherhood, *all our brethren*, go in it, and our Eldest Brother went first.

#### PERSEVERANCE AND PROGRESS IN GRACE.

But the God of all grace who hath called us unto His eternal joy by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

His divine doctrine and exhortations, the Apostle closes with prayer, as we follow this rule in public after the word preached.

So St. Paul frequently did, and so Christ himself, John xvii., after that sermon in the preceding chapters. It were well if both ministers and people would follow the same way more in private, each for themselves, and each for the other. The want of this is mainly the thing that makes our preaching and hearing so barren and fruitless. The ministers of the Gospel should indeed be as the angels of God, going betwixt Him and His people; not only bringing down useful instructions from God to them, but putting up earnest supplications to God for them. In the tenth chapter of St. Luke, the Disciples are sent forth and appointed to preach; and in the eleventh, we have them desiring to be taught to pray; *Lord teach us to pray*. And without this, there can be little answer or success in the other; little springing up of this seed, though ministers sow it plentifully in preaching, unless they secretly water it with their prayers and their tears.

And people, truly, should keep some correspondence in this duty, and that, if other obligation will not persuade, even for their own advantage; for it returns unto them with abundant interest. If much of the Spirit be poured forth on ministers, are they not the more able to unfold the spiritual mysteries of the Gospel, and to build up their people in the knowledge of them? Oh, that both of us were more abundant in this rich and sweet exercise!

*But the God of all grace, who hath called us to eternal glory by Christ Jesus.*] This prayer suits the Apostle St. Paul's word, in his direction to the Philippians (ch. iv. v. 6); it is *supplication with thanksgiving*, prayer with praise. In the prayer or petition, consider, 1st, the matter, and 2ndly, the style.

The matter, or thing requested, is expressed in divers brief words, *Make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you*; which, though they be much of the same sense, yet are not superfluously multiplied, for they carry both the great importance of the thing, and the earnest desire in asking it. And though it be a little light and unsolid, to frame a different sense to each of them, (nor are any of the ways that such interpreters have taken in it, very satisfactory to any discerning judgment:) yet I conceive they are not altogether without some profitable difference. The first [*Perfect*,] implies, more clearly than the rest, their advancement in victory over their remaining corruptions and infirmities, and their progress towards perfection. *Sablish*, hath more express reference to both the inward lightness and inconstancy that are natural to us, and the counterblasts of persecutions and temptations, outward oppositions: and it imports the caring of the one, and support against the other. *Strengthen*, has respect to the growth of their graces, especially the gaining of further measures of those graces wherein they are weakest and lowest. And *settle*, though it seems the same, and in substance is the same with the other word, *sablish*, yet it adds somewhat to it very worthy of

consideration ; for it signifies, to found or fix upon a sure foundation, and so, indeed, may have an aspect to Him who is the foundation and strength of believers, on whom they build by faith, even *Jesus Christ*, in whom we have all, both victory over sin, and increase of grace, and establishment of spirit, and power to persevere against all difficulties and assaults. He is that *corner foundation-stone* laid in *Zion*, that *they that build upon Him may not be ashamed*, Isa. xxviii. 16 ; that *Rock* that upholds the house founded on it, in the midst of all winds and storms, Matt. vii. ult.

*Observe* : 1st, These expressions have in them that which is primarily to be sought after by every Christian, *perseverance* and *progress* in grace. These two are here interwoven ; for there be two words importing the one, and two the other, and they are interchangeably placed. This is often urged on Christians as their duty, and accordingly ought they to apply themselves to it, and use their highest diligence in it ; not to take the beginning of Christianity for the end of it, to think it enough, if they are entered into the way of it, and to sit down upon the entry ; but to walk on, to *go from strength to strength*, and even through the greatest difficulties and discouragements, to pass forward with unmoved stability and fixedness of mind. They ought to be aiming at perfection. It is true, we shall still fall exceedingly short of it ; but the more we study it, the nearer shall we come to it ; the higher we aim, the higher shall we shoot, though we shoot not so high as we aim.

It is an excellent life, and it is the proper life of a Christian, to be daily outstripping himself, to be spiritually wiser, holier, more heavenly-minded to-day than yesterday, and to-morrow (if it be added to his life) than to-day ; *Suavissima vita est indies sentire se fieri meliorem* : every day loving the world less, and Christ more, than on the former, and gaining every day some further victory over his secret corruptions ; having his passions more subdued and mortified, his desires in all temporal things more cool and indifferent, and in spiritual things, more ardent ; that miserable lightness of spirit cured, and his heart rendered more solid and fixed upon God, aspiring to more near communion with Him, and laboring that particular graces may be made more lively and strong, by often exercising and stirring them up ; faith more confirmed and stayed, love more inflamed, composed meekness producing more deep humility. Oh, this were a worthy ambition indeed ! You would have your estates growing, and your credit growing ; how much rather should you seek to have your graces growing, and not be content with anything you have attained to !

*Obs. 2nd.* But all our endeavors and diligence in this will be vain, unless we look for our perfecting and establishing from that *right hand*, without which we can do nothing. Thither the Apostle moves his desires for his brethren, and so teaches them



the same address for themselves : *The God of all grace make you perfect.*

This prayer is grounded (as all prayer of faith must be) on the promise and covenant of God. *He is our rock, and His work is perfect.* Deut. xxxii. 4. He doth not begin a building, and then leave it off : none of His designs break in the middle, or fall short of their end. *He will perfect that good work which he hath begun, to the day of Jesus Christ.* Phil. i. 6. And how often is he called the strength of those that trust in Him, their buckler, and His way perfect. Psal. xviii. 30.

Hence is the stability of grace, the perseverance of the saints ; it is founded upon His unchangeableness. Not that they are unchangeable, though truly sanctified, if they and their graces were left to their own management : no, it is He who not only gives that rich portion to those He adopts to be His children, but keeps it for them, and them in the possession of it. *He maintains the lot of our inheritance.* Psal. xvi. 5. And to build that persuasion of perseverance upon His truth and power engaged in it, is no presumption ; yea, it is high dishonor to Him to question it.

But when Nature is set to judge of Grace, it must speak according to itself, and therefore very unsuitably to that which it speaks of. Natural wits apprehend not the spiritual tenor of the Covenant of Grace, but model it to their own principles, and quite disguise it : they think of nothing but their resolves and moral purposes ; or if they take up with some confused notion of grace, they imagine it put into their own hands, to keep or to lose it, and will not stoop to a continual dependence on the strength of Another, rather choosing that game of hazard, though it is certain loss and undoing, to do for themselves.

But the humble Believer is otherwise taught ; he *hath not so learned Christ.* He sees himself beset with enemies without, and buckled to a treacherous heart within, that will betray him to them : and he dares no more trust himself to himself, than to his most professed enemies. Thus it ought to be, and the more the heart is brought to this humble petitioning for that ability, and strengthening, and perfecting, from God, the more shall it find both stability, and peace from the assurance of that stability.

And certainly, the more the Christian is acquainted with himself, the more will he go out of himself for his perfecting and establishing. He finds that when he thinks to go forward, he is driven backward, and that sin gets hold of him, oftentimes when he thought to have smitten it. He finds that such is the miserable inconstancy of his heart in spiritual things, the vanishing of his purposes and breaking off of his thoughts, that they usually die ere they be brought forth : so that when he hath thought, I will pray more reverently, and set myself to behold God when I speak to Him, and watch more over my heart, that it fly not out and leave



me,—possibly the first time he sets to it, thinking to be master of his intention, he finds himself more scattered, and disordered, and dead, than at any time before. When he hath conceived thoughts of humility and self-abasement, and thinks, Now I am down, and laid low within myself, to rise and look big no more,—some vain fancy creeps in anon, and encourages him, and raises him up to his old estate; so that in this plight, had he not higher strength to look at, he would sit down and give over all, as utterly hopeless of ever attaining to his journey's end.

But when he considers Whose work that is within him, even these small beginnings of desires, he is encouraged by the greatness of the work, not to despise and despair of the small appearance of it in its beginning, *not to despise the day of small things*, Zech. iv. 10; and knowing that it is *not by any power, nor by might, but by His Spirit*, that it shall be accomplished, he lays hold on that word, *Though thy beginning be small, yet thy latter end shall greatly increase*. Job viii. 7.

The Believer looks to Jesus, Heb. xii. 2—*looks off from all oppositions and difficulties, looks above them to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; author, and therefore finisher*. Thus, that royal dignity is interested in the maintenance and completion of what He hath wrought. Notwithstanding all thy imperfections, and the strength of sin, He can and will subdue it. Notwithstanding thy condition is so light and loose, that it were easy for any wind of temptation to blow thee away, yet He shall hold thee in His right hand, and there thou shalt be firm as the earth, that is so settled by His hand, that though it hangs on nothing, yet nothing can remove it. Though thou art weak, He is strong; and it is *He that strengthens thee, and renews thy strength*, Isa. xl. 28: when it seems to be gone and quite spent, He makes it fresh, and greater than ever before. The word here rendered *renew*, signifies *change*: they shall have, for their own, His strength. A weak believer, and his strong Saviour, will be too hard for all that can rise against them. It is here fit, as in statues, *hominem cum basi metiri*, to measure the man with the basis on which he stands; and there is no taking the right measure of a Christian but in that way.

Thou art now, indeed, exposed to great storms and tempests, but He builds thee on Himself, makes thee, by believing, to found on Him; and so, though the winds blow and the rain fall, yet thou standest, being built on Him thy rock. And this, indeed, is our safety, the more we cleave to our Rock and fasten on Him. This is the only thing that *establishes* us, and *perfects*, and *strengthens* us; therefore, well is that word added, *found you, or settle you, on your foundation*. This is the firmness of the Church against the gates of hell; He is a strong Foundation for its establishment, and a living Foundation, having influence into

the Building, for perfecting it ; for it is a living House, and the foundation is a root sending life into the stones, so that *they grow up*, as this Apostle speaks, ch. ii. 4.

It is the inactivity of faith on Jesus, that keeps us so imperfect, and wrestling still with our corruptions, without any advancement. We wrestle in our own strength too often, and so are justly, yea, necessarily, foiled ; it cannot be otherwise till we make Him our strength. This we are still forgetting, and had need to be put in mind of, and ought frequently to remind ourselves. We would be at doing for ourselves, and insensibly fall into this folly, even after much smarting for it, if we be not watchful against it. There is this wretched natural independency in us, that is so hard to beat out. All our projectings are but castles in the air, imaginary buildings without a foundation, till once laid on Christ. But never shall we find heart-peace, sweet peace, and progress in holiness, till we be driven from it, to make Him all our strength ; till we be brought to do nothing, to attempt nothing, to hope or expect nothing, but in Him : and then shall we indeed find His fulness and all-sufficiency, and *be more than conquerors through Him who hath loved us*.

#### Fulness of Grace and Consolation in God.

*But the God of all grace.*] By reason of our many wants and great weakness, we had need to have a very full hand and a very strong hand to go to for our supplies and for support. And such we have indeed : our Father is the *God of all grace*, a spring that cannot be drawn dry, no, nor so much as any whit diminished.

*The God of all grace* : the God of imputed grace, of infused and increased grace, of furnished and assisting grace. The work of salvation is all Grace from beginning to end. Free Grace in the plot of it, laid in the counsel of God, and performed by His own hand all of it : His son sent in the flesh, and His Spirit sent into the hearts of His chosen, to apply Christ. All grace is in Him, the living spring of it, and flows from Him : all the various actings, and all the several degrees of grace. He is the God of pardoning grace, who *blotteth out the transgressions of His own children, for His own name's sake*, (Isa. xliii. 25,) who takes up all quarrels, and makes one act of oblivion serve for all reckonings betwixt Him and them. And, as He is the God of pardoning grace, so withal, the God of sanctifying grace, who refines and purifies all those He means to make up into vessels of glory, and hath in His hand all the fit means and ways of doing this. purifies them by afflictions and outward trials, by the reproaches and hatreds of the world. The profane world little know how serviceable they are to the graces and comforts of a Christian, when they dishonor and persecute him ; yea, little doth a Christian himself sometimes

think how great his advantage is by those things, till he finds it, and wonders at his Father's wisdom and love. But most powerfully are the children of God sanctified by the Spirit within them, without which, indeed, no other thing could be of any advantage to them in this. That Divine fire kindled within them, is daily refining and sublimating them, that Spirit of Christ conquering sin, and by the mighty flame of His love, consuming the earth and dross that is in them; making their affections more spiritual and disengaged from all creature-delights. And thus, as they receive the beginnings of grace freely, so all the advances and increases of it; life from their Lord still flowing and causing them to grow, abating the power of sin, strengthening a fainting faith, quickening a languishing love, teaching the soul the ways of wounding strong corruptions, and fortifying its weak graces; yea, in wonderful ways advancing the good of His children by things not only harsh to them, as afflictions and temptations, but by that which is directly opposite in its nature, sin itself: raising them by their falls, and strengthening them by their very troubles; working them to humility and vigilance, and sending them to Christ for strength, by the experience of their weaknesses and failings.

And as He is the God of pardoning grace, and of sanctifying grace in the beginning and growth of it, so also the God of supporting grace, of that supervenient influence without which the graces placed within us would lie dead, and fail us in the time of greatest need. This is the immediate assisting power that bears up the soul under the hardest services, and backs it in the sharpest conflicts, communicating fresh auxiliary strength, when we, with all the grace we have dwelling within us, are surcharged. Then He steps in, and opposes His strength to a prevailing and confident enemy, that is at the point of insulting and triumph. When temptations have made a breach, and enter with full force and violence, He lets in so much present help on a sudden, as makes them give back, and beats them out. *When the enemy comes in as a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against him.* Isa. lix. 11. And no siege can be so close as to keep out this aid, for it comes from above.

And by this, a Christian learns that his strength is in God; whereas, if his received grace were always party enough, and able to make itself good against all incursions, though we know we have received it, yet being within us, we should possibly sometimes forget the receipt of it, and look on it more as ours than as His; more as being within us, than as flowing from Him. But when all the forces we have, the standing garrison, are by far overmached, and yet we find the assailants beaten back, then we must acknowledge Him who sends such seasonable relief, to be, as the Psalmist speaks, *a very present help in trouble.* Psal. xli. 1.

All St. Paul's constant strength of grace inherent in him, could not fence him so well, as to ward off the piercing point of that sharp temptation, whatsoever it was, which he records, 2 Cor. xii. 7. The redoubled buffetings that he felt, came so thick upon him, that he was driven to his knees by it, to cry for help to be sent down, without which he found he could not hold out; and he had an answer assuring him of help, a secret support that should maintain them: *My grace is sufficient for thee: q. d.*, though thine own be not, that is, the grace which I have already given thee, yet *Mine* is, that is, the grace which is in Me, and which I will put forth for thy assistance.

And this is our great advantage and comfort, that we have a Protector who is Almighty, and who is always at hand, who can and will hear us whensoever we are beset and straitened. That captain had reason, who, on being required to keep Milan for the King of France, went up to the highest turret, and cried out three times, "King of France," and then refused the service, because the king heard him not, and nobody answered for him, meaning to imply the great distance, and so the difficulty of sending aid when need should require. But we may be confident of our supplies in the most sudden surprisals. Our King can, and will hear us when we call, and will send relief in due season. We may be in apparent hazards, but we shall not be wholly vanquished: it is but crying to Him in our greatest straits, and help appears. Possibly we see the host of enemies first, and that so great that there is no likelihood of escaping, but then, praying, we espy the fiery chariots and horsemen, and may say, *There are more with us than with them.* 2 Kings vi. 16.

The Apostle St. Paul calls our God, *the God of all consolation*, Rom. xv. 5, as here he is styled *the God of all grace*. And this is our rejoicing, that in His hand is all good, our sanctification and consolation, assistance and assurance, *grace and glory*. And this style suits most fitly with the present petition, that for our *perfecting, and stablishing, and strengthening in grace*, we have recourse to *the God of all Grace*, whose former gifts do not discourage us from seeking more, but indeed both encourage us, and engage Him for the perfecting of it. It is His will that we have constant recourse to Him for all we want. He is so rich, and withal so liberal, that He delights in our seeking and drawing much from Him; and it is by believing and praying, that we do draw from Him. Were these plied, we should soon grow richer. But remember, all this grace that we would receive from the God of all Grace, must be from *God in Christ*. There it flows for us, and thither we are directed. *It was the Father's good pleasure, that in Him should all fulness dwell*, Col. i. 19, and that *for us*, that we might know whither to go, and where to apply for it.



## The Eternal Glory to be Revealed.

Now, for the further opening up of His riches, expressed in this title, *the God of all Grace*, there is added one great act of grace, which doth indeed include all the rest, for we have in it the beginning and the end of the work linked together; the first effect of grace upon us, in *effectual calling*, and the last accomplishment of it, in *eternal glory*. *Who hath called us to His eternal glory.*

This *calling*, I conceive, doth not simply mean the design of the Gospel in its general publication, wherein the outward call lies, that it holds forth and sets before us, eternal glory as the result of Grace; but refers to the real bringing of a Christian to Christ, and uniting him with Christ, and so giving him a real and firm title to glory,—such a call, as powerfully works grace in the soul, and secures glory to the soul; gives it a right to that inheritance, and fits it for it; and sometimes gives it even the evident and sweet assurance of it. This assurance, indeed, all the heirs of glory have not ordinarily within them, and scarcely any have at all times equally clear. Some travel on in a covert, cloudy day, and get home by it, having so much light as to know their way, and yet do not at all clearly see the bright and full sunshine of assurance; others have it breaking forth at times, and anon under a cloud; and some have it more constantly. But as all meet in the end, so all agree in this in the beginning, that is, in the reality of the thing; they are made unalterably sure heirs of it, in their effectual calling.

And by this the Apostle advances his petition for their support, and establishment, and advancement in the way of grace. The way of our calling to so high and happy an estate, did we apply our thoughts more to it, would work on us, and persuade us to a more suitable temper of mind, and course of life; would give us more noble and sublime thoughts, and ways above the world; and the stronger were our persuasion of it, the more strongly should we be thus persuaded by it. And as it would thus prevail with us, so might we use it to prevail with God for all needful grace.

All you who hear the Gospel, are, in the general, called to this Glory. It is told you where and how you may lay hold on it. You are told, that if you will let go your sins and embrace Jesus Christ, this glory shall be yours. It is His purchase, and the right of it lies in Him, and not elsewhere; and the way to obtain a right to Him is to receive Him for a Saviour, and at the same time for Lord and King; to become His subjects, and so to be made kings. This is our message to you, but you will not receive it. You give it a hearing, it may be, but do not indeed hearken to the motion; and this, of necessity, must proceed from unbelief. Were you indeed persuaded, that in coming unto Christ, you were immedi-

ately not only set free from a sentence of death, which is still standing over your head while you are out of Him, but withal entitled to a crown, made heirs of a kingdom, an eternal kingdom,—I say, if this were believed, were it possible to slight Him as the most do, and turn back the bargain, and bestow their money elsewhere upon trifles of no value, children's commodities, rattles, and painted toys! Such are your greatest projects, even for earthly kingdoms, in respect of Christ, and this glory provided in Him. How wonderful is it that where this happiness is daily proclaimed, and you are not only informed of it, but entreated to receive it, not only is it offered you, but pressed and urged upon you, and you say you believe the matter: yet still, the false glory and other vanities of this world amuse and entangle you, so that you close not with this rich offer of *eternal glory*.

But where any do close with it, it is indeed by a Call that goes deeper than the ear, a word spoken home to within, a touch of the Spirit of God upon the heart, which hath a magnetic virtue to draw it, so that it cannot choose but follow, and yet chooses it most freely and sweetly; doth most gladly open to let in Jesus Christ and His sweet government upon his own terms, takes Him and all the reproaches and troubles that can come with Him. And well it may, seeing, beyond a little passing trouble, abiding, eternal glory.

The state to which a Christian is called, is not a poor and sad estate, as the World judges; it is no less than *eternal glory*. The World think it strange to see the believer abridge himself in the delights of sin, their common pursuits and eager graspings after gains, or honors, or pleasures of sense; but they know not the infinite gain that he hath made, in that he hath exchanged this dross for downweight of pure gold. The world see what the Christian leaves, but they see not what he comes to, what his new purchase is, in another place; they see what he suffers, but not what he expects, and shall attain as the end of those sufferings, which shall shortly end. But he, knowing well upon what conditions all these things run, may well say, *Non magna relinquo, magna sequor*—How small is what I forsake, how great that which I follow after!

It is Glory, Eternal Glory, *His eternal Glory*, true, real Glory. All here that is so named, is no more than a name, a shadow of glory; it cannot endure the balance, but is found too light, as was said of a great monarch, Dan. v.; and even many principalities and provinces, put into the scale one after another, still add no weight: yea, possibly, as a late political writer wittily observes of a certain monarch, “The more kingdoms you cast in, the scale is still the lighter.” Men are naturally desirous of glory, and gape after it; but they are naturally ignorant of the true nature and place of it: they seek it where it is not, and, as Solomon says of riches, *set their hearts on that which is not*, Prov. xxiii. 5—hath

no subsistence or reality. But the glory above, is true, real glory, and bears weight, and so bears aright the name of glory, the term for which in the Hebrew [*Kebud*] signifies *weight*; and the Apostle's expression seems to allude to that sense: speaking of the same glory to come, he calls it *a far more excellent weight of glory*. 2 Cor. iv. 17. It weighs down all labor and sufferings in the way, so far, as that they are not once worth the speaking of in respect of it. It is the *hyperbole*. Other glory is overspoken, but this Glory is overglorious to be duly spoken: it exceeds and rises above all that can be spoken of it.

*Eternal.*] Oh, that adds much! Men would have more reason so to affect and pursue the glory of the present world, such as it is, if it were lasting, if it stayed with them when they have caught it, and they stayed with it to enjoy it. But how soon do they part! They pass away, and the glory passes away, both as smoke. Our life itself is as a vapour. And as for all the pomp and magnificence of those that have the greatest outward glory, and make the fairest show, it is but a show, a *pageant* that goes through the street, and is seen no more. But this hath length of days with it—*Eternal Glory*. Oh, a thought of that swallows up all the grandeur of the world, and the noise of reckoning years and ages. Had one man continued, from the Creation to the end of the world, at the top of earthly dignity and glory, admired by all, yet at the end, everlasting oblivion being the close, what a nothing were it to *eternal glory*! But, alas! we cannot be brought to believe, and deeply to take the impression of eternity; and this is our undoing.

#### Manner in which we should praise God.

We should seek after a fit temper, and labor to have our hearts brought to a due disposition for His praises. And in this view, [1.] See that they be spiritual. All spiritual services require that, but this service most, as being indeed the most spiritual of all. Affection to the things of this earth, draws down the soul, and makes it so low set, that it cannot rise to the height of a song of praise; and thus, if we observed ourselves, we should find, that when we let our hearts fall and entangle themselves in any inferior desires and delights, as they are unfitted generally for holy things, so, especially, for the praises of our holy God. Creature loves debase the soul, and turn it to earth, and praise is altogether heavenly.

[2.] Seek a heart purified from self-love, and possessed with the love of God. The heart which is ruled by its own interest is scarcely ever content, still subject to new disquiet. Self is a vexing thing, for all things do not readily suit our humors and wills, and the least touch that is wrong to a selfish mind distempers it,

and disrelishes all the good things about it. A childish condition it is, if crossed but in a toy, to throw away all. Whence are our frequent frettings and grumbings, and why is it that we can drown a hundred high favors in one little displeasure, so that still our finger is upon that string, and there is more malcontent and repining for one little cross, than praises for all the mercies we have received? Is not this evidently from the self-love that abounds in us? Whereas, were the love of God predominant in us, we should love His doings and disposals, and bless His name in all. Whatsoever were His will, would, in that view, be amiable and sweet to us, however in itself harsh and unpleasant. Thus should we say in all: This is the will and the hand of my Father, who doth all things wisely and well; blessed be His name.

The soul thus framed, would praise in the deeps of troubles: not only in outward afflictions, but in the saddest inward condition, it would be still extolling God, and saying, However He deal with me, He is worthy to be loved and praised. He is great and holy, He is good and gracious: and whatsoever be His way and thoughts towards me, I wish Him glory. If he will be pleased to give me light and refreshment, blessed be He: and if He will have me to be in darkness again, blessed be He, glory to His name! Yea, what though He should utterly reject me, is He not for that to be accounted infinitely merciful in the saving of others? Must He cease to be praiseworthy for my sake? If He condemn, yet He is to be praised, being merciful to so many others; yea, even in so dealing with me, He is to be praised, for in that He is just.

Thus would pure love reason for Him, and render praise to Him. But our ordinary way is most untoward and unbecoming His creatures, even the best of them, much more such worms as we are; that things must rather be to our mind than His, and we must either have all our will, or else, for our part, He shall have none of His praises.

[3.] Labor for that which on these two will follow, a *fixed heart*. If it be refined from creature-love, and self-love, spirituality and love of God will fix it; and then shall it be fit to praise, which an unstable, uncomposed heart can never be, any more than an instrument can be harmonious and fit to play on, that hath loose pins, still slipping and letting down the strings, pins that never fasten. And thus are the most: they cannot fix to Divine thoughts, to consider God, to behold and admire His excellency and goodness, and His free love. Oh, that happy word of David, worthy to be twice repeated! When shall we say it? *O God, my heart is fixed*: well might he add, *I will sing and give praise*. Psal. lvi. 7. Oh, that we would pray much that He would fix our hearts, and then, He having fixed them, we should praise Him much.



## FROM THE LECTURES ON ST. MATTHEW.

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We have seen His Star in the East, and we have come to worship Him

When a soul is busy asking after Jesus Christ, if it be inquired what would you do with him, Why this is my purpose, will it say, I would worship him. I would not only be saved by him, but I would fall down and adore him, and acknowledge him my king; and if I had any thing better than another, I would offer it him. But what hast thou? Hast thou rich presents for him? Alas! no. These are called wise men, and were, it seems, rich; had rich gifts. I am a foolish and a poor creature, and I have nothing to offer.—Nothing. Hast thou a heart? Yes: a heart I have; but, alas! there can be nothing more unfit for him, and unworthy of him: it is dark, and foul, and hard, all disorder and filthiness. Yet, wilt thou give it him as it is, and be willing that he use and dispose of it as it pleases him? Oh, that he would accept of it, that he would take it upon any terms! Here it is: if it would fly out from this offer, I would he would lay hold of it. Oh! that it were once received by him, that it were in his hand; and then let him do with it what seems him good. Sayest thou so? Then it is done. Give it really and freely, and he will take, and make it better at its worst, than all the gold, and frankincense, and myrrh of all those rich countries where they abound, and will purify, rectify, and make it quite another thing than it is. And it shall never repent thee to have made a gift of it to him. He shall frame it to his own likeness, and in return will give thee himself, and be thine for ever.

The mature ages of John and our Saviour when each entered on His ministry.

John the Baptist, an extraordinary person in his birth and calling, holy from the womb, *a prophet, and more than a prophet*; and Jesus Christ himself far more than he, his Lord and Master, the Prince of Prophets; and yet, neither of them came abroad in his ministry till about the age of thirty years, the time specified in the law for the service of the house of God. But our ignorance makes us bold and fool-hardy: we rush forward not knowing ourselves nor this calling, its excellency and holiness, and our meanness and unholiness. This I say, not that I think measure doth

punctually and literally tie us, especially the necessity of some times and the scarcity of faithful laborers being considered, upon which some may lawfully, yea, ought to be drawn forth, if unwilling and yet able.

But surely, the consideration of these examples should give a due check and curb to our usual precipitate hearts, which in these times had need of some restraint, even in some who possibly have some competency both of abilities and true piety. Good fruit may be plucked too green, which, let alone awhile to ripen, would prove much more pleasant and profitable.

In these two, their long lying hid is so much the more remarkable, inasmuch as besides their singular fitness for appearing much sooner, they had so short a time allotted for their course; the Forerunner but about one year, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself but about three years and a half. But this was the assigned time in the Divine wisdom, which was found sufficient for the work committed to them; and what needs more? Let not any grudge for themselves, or for any other, their speedy removal, upon this conceit, that they might, in nature's course, continue much longer, and, in appearance, through their labor be still more serviceable. Let all rather study for themselves, and wish unto others, that they may be diligent in their work while their day lasts, be it short or long, faithful and fruitful in their generation, and the shorter their day is like to be, work the faster; for certainly the good of life is not in the length of it, but in the use of it.

#### Repentance.

Repentance levels the heart to God, makes it a plain for Christ to walk in, casts down the mountains of pride, and raises the soul from base, low, earthly ways and affections, smooths the rugged passions, and straightens the crooked deceit of the heart, makes it sincere and straight both towards God and man. And then the reason, *the kingdom of God is at hand*, is implied in that, *Prepare his way*; that says, He is coming, is upon his way, and therefore sends his harbinger to make it fit for him. And this is our business, to be dealing with our hearts, levelling, smoothing, and straightening them for our Lord, that he may take delight to dwell and walk in them, and refresh them with his presence; and, certainly, the more holy diligence is used in suiting the heart to his holy will, the more of his sweet presence shall we enjoy.

John's Severity to the Pharisees and Sadducees, when they came to his baptism.

Great multitudes flocked to him, to hear him, and be baptized. For though Baptism, in the way he used it, was not usual, yet their accustomed use of legal worship made it the less strange,

and the more acceptable to them. And being accompanied with the doctrine of repentance, remission of sins, and the news of the kingdom of heaven approaching, it could not choose but find some reverence and attention. But certainly, of multitudes that will run to the word, and, possibly, particularly flock after the ministry of some for a time, there may be many, as doubtless were there, that are but light stuff, carried with the stream as corks and straws are. Men should examine well even such things as seem to speak some love to religion in them, whether they be real or not. This, John does not spare to tell home to the seemingly best of those that came to him, that esteemed themselves, and were esteemed by others, more religious than the multitude. Yea, the Spirit of God directed him to deal more sharply with them than with others that came to him; they being of all others commonly most confident of self-righteousness, and therefore furthest from the true work of repentance, which humbles the soul to the dust, and lays it low in its own eyes: these sects being, beyond the multitude, swelled with conceit of their own estate, he spares the rest, and pricks them sharply, that the tumor may fall. It may seem somewhat strange that he entertains so roughly those that came respectfully to him, and with others were willing and desirous to hear his doctrine, and partake of his baptism. Was not this the way to beat them back, and make them distaste both?

There is, indeed, much prudence required in the ministers of the word, to know to attemper their admonitions and reproofs, that by too much rigor they discourage not weak beginners who are inquiring after the ways of God; but withal they should be no less wary that by too much credulity and lenity they sooth not any in their formality and carnal confidence. And the most we have to deal withal, commonly are in most hazard upon this hand; there is too little heart-humblng. And many are ready to take up some piece of reformation of their ways, and the externals of religion, and deem themselves presently good Christians. Oh! the deceit and slothfulness of our hearts! How ready are we to lay hold upon an easy guise of our own, and think what some further press, is but melancholy and needless preciseness!

My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

In this word lies all the comfort of a Christian. No pleasingness, nor acceptance, indeed, out of him: but in him, all acceptance of all who are in him. Nothing delights the Father but in this view. All the world is as nothing in his eye, and all men hateful and abominable by sin. Thou, with all thy good nature, and good breeding, and good carriage, art vile and detestable out of Christ. But if thou get under the robe of Jesus, thou and all thy guiltiness and vileness, then art thou lovely in the Father's

eye. Oh! that we could absolutely take up in him, whatsoever we are, yet shrouded under him! Constant, fixed believing is all. Let not the Father then see us but in the Son, and all is well.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.

The Apostle doth fitly style our Lord Jesus, *the captain*, or leader, *of our salvation*. He marches, leads all the way, puts us on nothing that he hath not first encountered. And in his going before, there is that decorum there marked, Heb. xii. 10: *It was meet he should be made perfect by sufferings*. So particularly by this kind, that is the sharpest sensation, by these he was entered into his calling; initiated or consecrated, as the word there is. Let none, therefore, of his followers think to go free. If you mean to follow Christ, reckon for temptations, to meet them even at first, and so in all the way. We readily misreckon, though warned; we count as we would have it; write up such ease and joys, &c., and think not on afflictions without, and temptations within, which yet are much our portion here. Unwise to put to sea and expect no storms, nothing but fair weather! Let this be our warning, that we be not secure; we shall meet temptations. But let this be our comfort, that we be not dismayed, that in this we do follow him. He went before us in this conflict, and overcame before us, and for us; and we likewise, in his strength, shall overcome.

*Then.—When? Look backward. Then—*presently after he was baptized, and not simply by the water of Jordan, but by the Spirit from Heaven, and was singularly replenished, *full of the Holy Ghost*, as St. Luke hath it, Luke iv. 1. Thus shalt thou be sure to be assaulted when thou hast received the greatest enlargements from Heaven, either at the sacrament or in prayer, or in any other way; then look for an onset. This arch-pirate lets the empty ships pass, but lays wait for them when they return richest laden.

*Then.—Again, look forward. Then—*when he was to enter on his work, his public ministry. Thus look to be assailed, when thou art to engage in any special service. Each according to his place will find this: when he is upon some purpose of honoring God in any particular undertaking or course, and is nearest the performance, then shall the strength of hell be mustered up against him. Now, knowing it to be thus, this ought rather to embolden than discourage us in any such way. This expert enemy knows his interest well, and does not thus bestir himself lightly, but feels that his kingdom is in danger, and that he shall certainly be a loser.

Now, as this is incident to every Christian, and particularly, according to the eminency of their service, to ministers of Jesus



Christ, as here to him when towards entering on his own ministry, so, in this, they should reinforce themselves in him; should follow him on, and apply and employ him for the victory.

This [Temptation] was one of Luther's schoolmasters, and so it is to all the servants of Christ; and so are all the three, Prayer, Meditation, and Temptation. And this is very needful, that both with the more skill, and with the more compassion, they may be helpful to them that are tempted. Certainly, in all things, experience gives the deepest sense and the readiest faculties. He who was here tempted, could know more by speculation than ever any man; yet was it found meet, that even He should be trained by the experience of these things, as in that cited place, Heb. ii. 10,—*perfected* as captain, made a complete commander by hard services, sufferings, and temptations. So Heb. iv. 15, and v. 2—8. Men expert in war, laugh at the learnedest discourse of pedants, as is reported of Hannibal.

Oh! heart feeling is a main thing in this. It is going to the wrong hand, for a troubled or tempted Christian to go to an untroubled, untempted minister, who never knew what that meant. Their errand takes not: they find little ease in complaining of their grief to him that never felt such a thing; as Nazianzen observes, that they who are stung with a serpent, cannot endure to bemoan themselves to any but some that have felt the pain. To have found such trouble, and then an issue, such and such comfort,—Oh, it enables much in that case.

Satan quoting Scripture.

The Devil can cite Scripture. Receive not, then, everything at first, that comes with an *it is written*; and as not everything of men's opinion thus backed, so, not those doubts that are raised within thee, and managed against thee in this way. How often does Satan make a poor believer at a stand by some Scripture objection! But take this course; follow thy Captain in this. Satan is a liar, and cuts and pares when he cites; as he here left out, *thy ways*, to make room for *Cast thyself headlong*, which was not the way. Now our Saviour does not contest with him about this, takes no notice of that sleight, but, in a plain, full counter-blow, beats him out of it, gives him another *it is written*, that carries clear how he abused his. And there is admirable wisdom in this much more than if he had disputed about the word which all observe here, was cunningly left out; for in this, our Saviour teaches us our better way in this case, either with perverse men, in the avouching of their errors, or with Satan, in his thus assaulting us with misalleged Scripture, not so much to subtilize about the very place or words abused. It may be so cunningly done sometimes, that we cannot well find it out; but this downright,

sure way beats off the sophister with another place, clearly and plainly carrying that truth which he opposes and we adhere to. So, though thou canst not clear the sense of an obscure Scripture, thou shalt always find a sufficient guard in another that is clearer.

Our Saviour was pleased thus to bear many assaults, and thus to fence and beat off the Tempter by the word, both for our instruction and comfort, who otherwise, for himself, could immediately have repelled him, and sent him back at first. But indeed he *pleased not himself* in anything: had an eye to us in all he did and suffered, and did all in reference to our advantage. Oh, how should we love him!

And let not any abuse of the Scripture, by Satan or by men, abate our esteem, or lead us to abandon our use of it; but let us study it still, labor to be well acquainted with it, make it our magazine, have ready our defences from thence in all kinds of assault. Oh! let this word dwell richly in us, for it is our life. A stone out of this brook smites Goliath. And observing these evils here, labor to be fortified against them. Surely they were main ones, that were brought forth in this combat. Ready we are either to distrust our God, or, in abused confidence, to presume upon unwarranted ways. And for the third temptation, how strong is it, though not to gain that gross point of disclaiming God for love of the world, yet, how many hearts are secretly and insensibly inveigled and stolen away from Him by it, drawn to neglect His worship, or to cold remissness in it, and to follow the ways of the honor, gain, or pleasures of this world, that Satan suggests, and so to worship him and it altogether, instead of the Lord our God, whom alone we are to adore and serve, and whose due is all our heart!

#### The Sermon on the Mount.

Others may grow stale, but this sermon, never so often read over, is always new. Oh, how full of divine doctrine! How plain, and yet how high and excellent, delighting the soul as a bright day, clear light all along! We need not strain for the clearness of it upon that word, *He opened his mouth*; for every word here spoken, speaks for itself; carries, as light does, its own evidence. He begins with that great point which all are concerned in, and all naturally someway desirous to know, the doctrine of blessedness, in short aphorisms: and the rest of his discourse follows out the same argument, directing the way to happiness in those graces, *purity, meekness, mercy, &c.* For although all grace is radically one, and he that hath one, hath all, yet they are thus specified: 1st. For the weakness of our apprehensions, which take not full view so easily, they are spelled out to us, but only so, that

taking them the easier severally, as letters of one word, we may set them together again, as all being one *blessedness*. 2dly. Though every true Christian hath all graces, yet all are not alike eminent in all. We may confidently say, that there is no one who equally excels in every grace; but in several persons, several particular graces do most act and evidence themselves, shooting up above the rest; yea, in one and the same person, one grace will, at some times, be more evident and sensible than at others. 3dly. They are thus parcelled out to us, that we may apply ourselves the more particularly sometimes to the study of one, sometimes to the study of another, the neglect whereof is a great cause of our great deficiency in them all. We hear them and like them, may be, and think, these are good, but we do not set to the attainment of them: we applaud, and leave them there; approve all, and neglect all. If at any time we have any desires after them, they are general and confused: we grasp at all, and catch nothing.

This I would recommend, to be more particular in our purposes; sometimes to set ourselves to some one grace, not secluding nor turning away the rest, for that cannot be, but yet, more particularly plying that one, were it *humility, poverty of spirit, meekness*, or any other; and for some time to make that one our main task, were it for some weeks or months together, and examine every day's practice in that particularly. But like unsettled students among many books, we rove and reel, and make offers at every grace, and still lag behind, and make no considerable purchase nor progression in any.

Now, for blessedness, what is the common voice, at least, of men's minds and practices, though they speak it not out? *Blessed* are the rich, the honorable, the well-landed or well-befriended, and they that can grow great enough in the world. But if we believe *this* Teacher, it is not these; no such matter. But if blessedness be in things spiritual and inward, then men would imagine readily of those things which sound highest, that have some grandeur, and somewhat heroic in them,—in great knowledge of faculty, and zeal for high services, or in raptures, and ecstasies, and singular divine experiences. But here there is nothing of these neither, but the meanest, most despised things; yea, those that (some of them) seem to sound as miserable and sad: *The poor in spirit—they that mourn—the meek, &c.* Oh! sweet, lowly graces, *poverty of spirit, meekness*, that grow low, and are of dark hue, as the violets, but of a fragrant smell; as one says, chief in garlands: these are prime in the garlands of a Christian. Oh! study these; seek to have them growing within you. Suffering remarkable martyrdom may seem to have some lustre in it; but how take you it, to be reviled and scoffed at, and hated, and taunted, by Christians in name, because thou desirest to be one indeed?

Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets.

He lays hold of this, takes occasion upon clearing a mistake that had arisen respecting him, to pass on to such doctrines as he knew were necessary for the clearing of the Law of God, wronged by false glosses; and he thus vindicates both himself and that Law whereof he was the lord and author. Some, possibly, to obstruct his way, and prejudice him in men's opinions, spake of him as a teacher of new doctrine, and an enemy of the Law: others, it may be, hearing of a doctrine that sounded new, would willingly have had it so, would have been free, and enjoy libertinism. Now, to dispel both misapprehensions, our Saviour owns his purpose to be nothing such. On the contrary, *I come not to destroy, but to fulfil*. This did he in all things, in doctrine and in practice; and he declares it a thing impossible for any to annul the Law; that if any should offer at it, in his actions or doctrine, he should undo himself, but not the least tittle of the Law. Yet, further, these men that cry up the Law, and would charge me with the dissolving of it, for all their noise, I declare to you, that except you take heed, and observe that Law better than they do, ye cannot enter into Heaven. How many deceive themselves, as these self-pleasing, vain men did! But be warned. *Except your righteousness*, your religion, go beyond the civil neighbor, the good church-keeper, the formal, painted professor, ye shall fall short of that which both you and they reckon upon. How many, who think themselves fair for Heaven, shall find themselves woefully mistaken, when it is past help! Oh! examine well in due time, and see whether you are indeed for Heaven or not. It is the saddest mistake ever man fell into, to dream on of Heaven, till he find himself in Hell.

#### Forgiveness of Injuries.

We have that sweet doctrine of not revenging, but patiently bearing, and readily forgiving of injuries, and loving enemies, and doing good to all. This does not bar any calm way of self-righting, to which there is sometimes an obligation; but men overstretch it, and passion and self-love domineer, under this pretext. Therefore, the words sound a little extreme, as a counter-bowing of our crooked hearts, but it is to bring them straight. Let Julian and other atheists laugh at it, but it is the glory of Christians. No doctrine or religion in the world, presses so much clemency and innocency, and bounty as theirs, even to sworn enemies. This, we say, is its glory. And whereas it seems to render men sheepish, to make them less than men, it makes them indeed more than men, even like God. Benignity and mercy or Divine and Godlike, chief traits of God's image in his children. His sun



risers, and his rain descends on the just and the unjust. So, a diffusive, sweet, bountiful soul, is still desiring to do good, by hand, by counsel, by any comfort within its reach towards all, rewarding good for evil. These things deeply thought on and really practised, would make Christians indeed, children like the Heavenly Father.

#### Alms, Prayer, and Fasting.

Good actions cannot well be hid, and possibly, some even of this sort, giving of alms. Yea, sometimes it may be necessary for example and exciting others, that they should know of it. But take heed that vanity creep not in under this. And further than either unavoidable necessity, or some evident further good of thy neighbor carries it, desire to be unknown and unseen in this. When it must be public, let thy intention be secret. Take no delight in having the eyes of men on thee : yea, rather count it a pain, and still eye God alone, for he eyes thee. And remember it, even in public acts of charity, and other such like, *He sees in secret*. Though the action be no secret, the spring, the source of it is, and He sees by what weights the wheels go, and He still looks upon that ; views thy heart, the hidden bent and intention of it, which man cannot see. So then, though in some cases thou must be seen to do, yet, in no case do to be seen : that differs much, and where that is, even the other will be as little as may be. Thou wilt desire rather, and, where it can be, still choose to do unseen, that others should know as little of thy charity as may be, besides the party that receives it ; yea, if it might be, that even the party might not know,—as he that stole in money under his sick friend's pillow ; yea, to let thy very self know as little as possible, as our Saviour here expresses it, *Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth*. An excellent word ! Reflect not on it as thy action, with self-pleasing ; that is the left hand in view ; but look on God's goodness to thee, that thou art not in the receiver's room, and he in thine ; that He makes thee able to relieve another, which many are not, and being able, makes thee willing, which far fewer are. For both, thou art to bless Him, and be the humbler, the more thou dost. Take thy very giving to thy distressed brother, as a gift from God, a further obligation on thee. Though he is pleased to become thy debtor for a further reward, yet, truly, the thing itself is His gift, and a great one, as David acknowledges excellently in their offering to the Temple, *1 Chron. xxix. 14 : But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly, after this sort ? For all things came of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee*. Not only the power, but the will is from God, both of *thine own which we give Thee*.

Oh, how far are the most from this direct looking to God, this heart enlarging love of God! And therefore are they so closehanded to the necessities of the poor, even of the saints, where some enforcing occasion, some eye of men, some wretched side respect or other draws it not forth. A thousand objections are raised: either they need it not, or will not accept of it, or have this fault or that, are proud or idle, &c. But does not thy God see what is at the bottom of all this logic, these disputes before they come off with anything? And when thou dost give, how much of self, and how little of God is there in it! The left hand knows, yea it is done with the left hand, though the bodily right hand do it. Most men's charity is altogether left handed: sinister respects and intentions are the main movers in it.

But how noble and happy a thing is a truly liberal heart! Even natural liberty hath much beauty in it, but much more that which is spiritual and Christian. According to thy power, abounding in good works, that is riches,—*rich in good works; and he that soweth plentifully, shall reap plentifully.* And be cheerful in it, and do this for God, out of love to Him. And for the fruit, how rich is that! So much as it is fit to look to reward, look to God's only. Take Him as thy debtor upon His word, rather than present payment from men. Theirs is present indeed, and our carnal hearts are all for the present, but consider, as it is present, so it passes presently, and is straightway spent. God's reward, though to come, is yet certain, and when come, is abiding, everlasting. Thus in respect of all good actions, and a holy self-denying course of life, in nothing take pay of men. How vain, what smoke is it, their breath, and how soon will it be spent! And then, when thou shouldst come to look for a reward from God, to know it is done, that you are paid already! That well judged, is one of the saddest words in all the Scripture, the hypocrites doom, He hath no more to look for; he would be seen, and was seen: he would be praised of men, and praised he was; he is paid, and can expect no further, but that reward which he would gladly miss, the hypocrite's portion, *eternal fire.*

As to *Prayer*, how foolish and how wretched a thing is it, to speak to God, and look to men! What is there wherein the heart will be single and abstracted from men, and commune with God alone, if not in prayer?

Another evil, much like to that of shew, is here corrected, an affected, empty, babbling, length in prayer, without affection. The want of that, makes a short prayer long and babbling; while much of that, makes a long prayer short: as in a speech, the quality is the measure of the quantity, a long speech may be very short. This affected length we incline to very much in holy exercises; many beads are dropped, and *paternosters* said, &c. We lay too much stress on the continuance and length: think all's

well, if enough be done ; whereas God's thoughts are far other, and ours should conform to his. It is enough if well done. If the heart is close to him in ever so short a prayer, there is much said in a little. We usually speak many words, and say little. For help in this, the most excellent model given by our Saviour, is here inserted ; the beautiful order and full comprehensive matter of which, can never be enough admired.

Then as to *Fasting*, which is a necessary help of Prayer ; it does unclog and free the wings of the soul to mount to Heaven ; and in some respects, it is a help to alms too. The same rule must here be observed, to appear as little as may be ; for the affected discovery spoils and loses all, yea, the needless discovery runs too much hazard, therefore it is by all means to be avoided. Personal fasting should be conducted secretly. Practise constant temperance. Better to let the bridle be always short held on thy appetite, than sometimes to pull it in extremely, and then lay the reins loose again ; that is the way to stumble and fall in both.

Judge not, that ye be not Judged.

This is a most common evil in man's perverse nature. Even moral men have taken notice of it ; yea, almost every man perceives and hates it in another, and yet hugs it in himself. This is the evil—unequal judging ; sharp-sightedness in the evils of others, and blindness in our own. And this very evil itself, of unequal judging, we can perceive in another, and overlook in our own bosom. What discourse fills most societies, and consumes their time, but descant on the conditions and actions of others !

Lawful judgments in states, for the censuring and punishment of crimes, are not barred ; nor, in private persons, a prudent discerning of what is evil and sinful in others, and judging accordingly of it. But this *judging* is, the usually taking the chair to censure all persons and affairs about us ; the prying into the actions, yea, even the intentions of men, either through a false glass, seeing faults where there are none, or through a magnifying and multiplying glass, making them appear many more than indeed they are. This is done, first, by a curious searching into the actions of others ; secondly, by the censuring of good and indifferent actions as evil ; thirdly, by hasty, rash censuring of doubtful actions, though a little suspicious ; fourthly, by a true censuring of evil actions, yet not with a good intention,—not to amend but to defame thy brother ; and, fifthly, by a desperate sentencing of the final estate even of the worst.

This is here declared to be dangerous and preposterous. 1st. *Dangerous*, by drawing an answerably severe censure and judgment upon ourselves, usually even from men, but, however, certainly from God. Thou that playest the arch critic on all around

thee, art thou without fault? Hast thou flattered thyself into such a fancy, as to think that thou art above all exception? Is there nothing, either a true or a seeming blemish, for any to point at in thee? Surely there is something, some part lying open, that men may hit at thee; and they will surely not miss to do it, if thou provokest them. However, remember, if thou shouldest escape all tongues, and pass free this way, yet, *One* unavoidable searching hand thou must come under; *His* judgment who sees thee to the bottom, and can charge thee with the secret sins of thy bosom. He can and will so pay thee home, all thy unjust judgments of thy brethren, with just judging of thy ways and thoughts, that thou thyself shalt confess no wrong is done to thee. *For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.*

Then, 2dly. It is *absurd and preposterous*. *First cast the beam out of thine own eye.* If thou wouldst, to any good purpose, take knowledge of thy brother's failings, begin at home; so clear thine eye as to discern aright. A heart well purified, speaks the most suitable and pertinent reproofs, and they prove the most piercing and powerful.

Shall these things prevail, my brethren? Were it love to God, a fire of holy zeal, it would seize first on things nearest it; but it is a flying, infernal wildfire, running abroad and scattering itself. Is not this the grand entertainment? Such-a-one is a foolish person; another, proud; a third, covetous. And of persons professing religion, yet will ye say, 'They are as contentious, and bitter, and avaricious as others; or, at best, if you have nothing to say against them particularly, yet, All is dissimulation: they are but hypocrites.' And while a mind is of this vein, believe me, the most blameless track of life, and in it the very best action, how easy is it to invent a sinister sense of it, and blur it!

But oh! my brethren, be not so foolish. Blunt the fiery edge off your censures on yourselves, where it is so safe and advantageous to be thorough and home. Just the opposite to this, judging others incurs sharp judgment; but judging thyself is the way not to be judged. 1 Cor. xi, 31. *For if we would judge ourselves, we shall not be judged.* This is the happy and gainful severity. Learn, then, to look upon others, and all their ways, with the highest charity, which *thinketh no evil*, is witty and inventive of good constructions upon anything that may clear them, as malice is of miscensure of the best things. Take all candidly and mildly by the easiest side, the right handle. And for thyself, search thy heart; sift, try thy best actions, find out thy own earthliness, thy pride and vanity, thy selfishness and hypocrisy, even in good. A self-searching Christian is made up of humility and meekness. If thou wouldst find much peace and favor with God and man, be very low in thine own eyes. Forgive thyself little, and others much.



Enter ye in at the Strait Gate.

This is undeniably a main point; yet, alas! we seem not to think so. How disinclined are we to the way of eternal happiness! The difficulty is so represented as to add an edge to our earnestness, not to abate and weaken our endeavors. This way is strait indeed, but there is still room enough within. John xiv. 2. *In my Father's house are many mansions.* The ease and delight there, shall abundantly compensate all the trouble in the way. We must resolve then, if we would not perish, that we must take this way, how strait and rugged soever, and strip and put off all that entangles and encumbers,—that swelling pride, those superfluous desires and lusts; yea, to put off and leave behind even self itself. Once in at that gate, we shall find all perfectly compensated. And remember, they are few that enter; few there are that so much as seek it, but far fewer that find it, even of those that make some kind of seeking after it. *Many shall seek to enter* (so it is in the other Evangelist,) *and shall not be able*; therefore, *strive ye*. What bustle is there made by sea and land for scraps of this earth, and Heaven alone is so cheap in our eyes, as if it were worth no diligence, scarce even a serious thought! Surely, either Heaven is but a fancy, or the world is mad!

Not every one that saith Lord, Lord.

But every man is his own worst deceiver; therefore he ought most to beware of himself. Whether teacher or learner, he is his own false prophet, *speaking peace where there is no peace*. Therefore, beware of yourselves. Delude not yourselves with a vain trust in an empty profession. *Not every one one that says Lord, Lord*—that makes much noise and sound of the name of Christ, yea, that bears his name to others, that preaches him. Oh! how many shall find themselves to have misreckoned in that day, when they are not owned by Him, but commanded away by that sad word *Depart!* Look to it, therefore, to the truth of denying yourselves, and your own will, and yielding yourselves up to God: *but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven*, says our Saviour. Oh! take heed of founding your house *in the sand*. Though ever so stately and fair built, and shewing fine, yet that foundation will be its ruin. There is no safe building but on the rock, *that Rock of salvation* who here taught this doctrine. Then come storms as they will, there can be no fear. *He that buildeth on Him shall not be ashamed.* 1 Peter ii. 6. No matter what houses or lands ye have here, whether any or none,—He himself had none here, provided you build on Him as the foundation of eternal blessedness. Oh, that men would think of this, and amidst all their ensuring of things still unsure, would mind the

making of this sure, which may be made so sure for ever, as not to be moved !

The People were astonished at his Doctrine.

A Divine way of teaching ! Even some not converted, are yet struck and astonished with it, but by this eminently, *He taught them as one having authority*. This not only by a powerful secret influence, on hearts which he touched by his Divine power, but even in the way of his own teaching. And for some measure of this, His ministers ought to seek, and to seek it from Him, if they would find it. There is a force in things spoken from the heart with holy and spiritual affection : even common things thus spoken, are far above the greatest strains and notions, that are only an harangue or speech framed by strength of gifts and study. Oh ! much prayer would put life and authority into what we speak. To be much on the mount with God, would *make our faces shine* when coming with His message to men.

A Centurion's Faith amidst the Unbelief of Israel.

This man was a stranger, and a soldier, yet, it seems, a proselyte ; and our Lord, receiving this as a kind of first fruits of the Gentiles, foretels upon it a plentiful harvest of them : *Many shall come, and the children of the kingdom be cast out*. Verse 11. This is a harsh word to the Jews ; and yet, thus often, the most remote and unlikely, who have long lived strangers to religion, have proved notable converts : and they that have lived from their childhood under a powerful ministry, and with persons professing religion, and have themselves been moulded into a form of it, yet die in their sins, and never lay hold of that salvation unto which they always seemed to be so near. And this near miss of happiness is the greatest misery. *Children of the kingdom* in outward appearance and church privileges, yet, prove children of wrath, not only not entering into the kingdom they had a seeming title to, but *cast out into the dungeon of utter darkness* !

Observe the misery of the damned, resembled by *utter darkness*, void of light, and full of hideous noises and cries ; *weeping and gnashing of teeth*. And the happiness of glory is resembled to a banquet, where there is full light and joy ; a coronation banquet, where all the company of kings *sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God*. And this and all other resemblances in Scripture, are but a dark shadow of that bright glory. Oh ! were the things of eternity, the misery and the blessedness to come, indeed believed, how much would our thoughts be in them, and how little room would they leave for the trifles and vanities that our hearts are taken up with !

Jesus saith unto him, Foxes have holes, &c.

Strange ! Our Saviour seems to turn off the very ready and full offer of one, and to put forward another who drew back. He is, indeed, absolutely free in his choice, and may without control do this, let pass high temporary fits and offers, and lay hold on what hath far less appearance. And the truth is, he is privy to the secret actions of men's hearts, and can discern in some of a very plausible zeal and forwardness, some false principles within, whence it is kindled ; and in others more slow and inactive, sees under that more sincerity at the bottom. This scribe, possibly, taken with the splendor of Christ's miracles, and the flocking of multitudes unto him, perceived not his present poverty and meanness, and after disgraces and sufferings. Many make lavish offers to religion at a time when it is in request, or possibly upon some discernment of its own worth and beauty, but do not count the cost ; consider not the enmity of the world, the outward meanness, the reproaching and despisings that usually attend it. It is indeed by far the best bargain with all those who count the cost, if men would understand it right, and think it so ere they engage in it.

Now we see what condition Christ, who was Lord of all, chose for our sakes, amidst his own to live as a stranger, having no property, not so much as the beasts and the birds. *He became poor to make us rich*, 2 Cor. viii. 9 ; not rich in those things he was poor in, but in things infinitely better. In that, he calls his followers, most commonly, to a conformity with himself : he forbids not, indeed, property and possessions, but surely we should learn amidst all to walk, in affection at least, like him, as strangers here, not glued to any thing, *using the world as though we used it not*. And they who are really thus as he was, Oh, what comfort have they in this ! How is it sweetened to them, if in that condition they indeed follow him ! Hast thou no dwelling of thy own, no possession, and little for present supply ? Look up to Him who passed through here in that very same way, and cleave the closer to Him ; so much the more eye him as thy riches and portion, and thou needest not envy kings in their best days. And whatsoever be thy estate, how soon shall it be past ! And all that live, have much a like space of earth to lie down in at last. But Oh, the rich inheritance above, for all that lay hold on it, and follow our Lord Jesus Christ by the way !

And being entered into a Ship, there arose a great Tempest.

Still new occasions, and accordingly, new evidence, of the Divine power of Jesus Christ. Upon the ship wherein He is, there may, and usually does arise a storm ; yet, happy is it to be em-

barked with Him upon all hazards ! His ship may be tost, but perish it cannot. His counsels are deep and wise, and we cannot find them out. He knows what He is about to do, when we can least understand Him. When we think that He leads out His people to be swallowed up in the sea, or destroyed in the wilderness, He is only raising a mount for Himself to be seen on, and bringing them into the view of dangers, yea, of apparent ruin, to be more glorious in their deliverance. *His way is in the deep, and His footsteps are not known.* *Canst thou by searching find out God ?* says He in Job. Which is not, I conceive, so much meant of His essence, as of His operations and ways ; which are so profound and untraceable. We are at a stand often to think what he means to do ; whether he has given up His Church and cause to the winds and waves, when His enemies rage and roar, and He is silent, as if He cared not what became of all. The seas swell, the ship is tost, and He sleeps.

Now to speak here of Christ putting on our natural frailties, or of this sleep, whether it was natural or voluntary ; it might be and likely was both : wearied with the concourse of the multitude on the land, he falls asleep in the ship ; yet, doubtless, he had the command of those natural inclinations in himself, and chooses now to sleep, to increase the appearance of the danger, and add horror to the visage of it. So no doubt it did : not all the blustering of the winds, nor the rising of the waves, was so frightful and sad to the disciples, as that their Master slept so sound in the midst of them ; so sound as if rocked asleep by them, and either wholly insensible, or very regardless of their danger : as St. Luke expresses their feelings, *Carest thou not that we perish ?* Now, in this man who slept, dwelt God who sleeps not, *The Watchman of Israel*, who does not so much as *slumber*. But they, either not so clearly understanding, or, in the fright, not so duly remembering and considering this, were eyeing only the posture wherein he was visible to them ; therefore, the sounder he slept, it awaked and increased their fear the more. And as Jesus Christ here really did, even so God seems sometimes to His own to do ; and they express it so. Thus the Psalmist : *Awake, arise, why sleepest Thou, O Lord ?* This He seems to do, when the ungodly prosper, and when His people lie trodden under foot, and he seems to take no notice of their pressure, nor stirs for their deliverance. And this is the saddest part of their affliction ; they have no hope nor stay, but in the favor and protection of their God : now when that is retired, and the curtain drawn, and He asleep, their prayers not heard, and no appearance of His help, I say, it is a grand trial of faith, which shakes and disquiets more than all other things, how terrible soever. No rage or noise of the enemy is so grievous as the silence and sleeping of God. Thus, in the soul, when lusts and temptations are swelling and raging, and God is



retired, and as asleep to it, says nothing, controls them not, but suffers them to take their course; this is that which breeds the highest anguish, and brings a soul to the mouth of the pit, to the brink of desperation. Then it is forced to cry for a word from his mouth: Lord Jesus, speak but a word; keep not silence to me, or I am undone; there is no recovery for me; if thou keep silence, I am dead: *I shall be like them that go down to the pit; or, as it is here, Save, Master, or we perish.*

And this is one main end for which he does sleep, to awake us, to arouse and stir our prayers, which commonly are, in times of ease, heavy, drowsy, lifeless things, as a man's speech in sleep, dreaming, incoherent, senseless stuff. This they may be to God, who hearkens to what the heart says in them, though to man's ears, the words may be fit and good sense. But by the straining of a sharp affliction, or near pressing danger, the heart is awaked and speaks itself. Such a word seems to sound in its ears, as that of the mariners to Jonah, *Arise, thou sluggard, and call upon thy God.* Men do but trifle in fair weather, but in the storm they are more in earnest. Especially, a soul acquainted with God, that follows and relies upon Him, will take this course and no other: it runs straight to Him, and if He be asleep, awakes Him. And in this they are to be approved and commended, that, as here, their course is to Jesus Christ, as confident of his power and willingness to deliver them. This the disciples did believe; otherwise they had not left working for themselves, to go to awake him.

Yet was there with their faith, a mixture of distempered, distrustful fear, which Jesus well knew, and which he would not otherwise have charged them with. He doth not altogether deny that there was faith in them, but checks the deficiency of it: *O ye of little faith, why did ye doubt?* Apprehend danger and fear, they might; yea, if they had not, they would not have come to Christ in that manner. Without a living sense of distress or danger, there can be neither faith nor prayer. These are stirred up and raised to act, by the knowledge and feeling of our need of help. But the misery is, we scarcely in anything know our bounds: our passions raised, do usually overflow and pass the banks. A little fear does but awake faith, but much fear weakens it, and in the awakening gives it too great a blow, such a one as astonishes it, and makes it stagger. That they were afraid, was tolerable; but their hearts, it seems, were not so established in the persuasion of Christ's Divine power and care of them, as became them; and this he plainly, yet gently, checks. And there is this alloy of distrust with believing, not only in the weaker, but even in the strongest Christian; and there is a continual wrestling betwixt them; sometimes the one is uppermost, and sometimes the other; but faith, in the end, shall have the victory. See

what strange difference there was betwixt Job and Job :—Would one think it were the same person ?—one while cursing his birth, and wishing for death, and yet, afterwards declaring, *Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him*. And again, afterwards, complaining, *Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face, and holdest me for Thy enemy ?* And yet anon, again, *I know that my Redeemer liveth*.

#### Conduct of the Gadarenes.

The Gadarenes themselves were the swine, viler than those the devils entered and drowned ; yea, they were worse possessed than the swine, and drowned in a more fearful deep, by the craft of those devils. And that was their plot. The devils, knowing how fast the hearts of the owners were linked to their swine, thought it likely that the swine being drowned, they would follow, would drown themselves in the rejecting of Jesus Christ. And they did so. How many who read or hear this with indignation, yet, possibly, do little better in their hearts,—cleaving to their herds, or other goods, gains, or pleasures, or anything of this earth, and in the love of these, refusing Jesus Christ ! Think it not a harsh word, but take heed ye be not such ; for of the multitudes to whom Christ is offered, there are very few whose hearts do really open to him, and receive him. But Oh, happy they that do ! This was the clearest instance of perfect misery, and yet, they were scarcely at all to be pitied, being the choosers and devisers of it themselves : *They besought Jesus to depart*, that is, besought life and blessedness to go from them. And what does a sinner, when he turns out and rejects motions and inspirations of holiness, lest his lusts and pleasures of sin should be lost, but dismiss Jesus, lest the swine should be drowned ?

—Said unto the sick of the Palsy, Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.

This, though not appearing to be the errand, was yet the most important part of the cure, the root of blessings and blessedness, removing the root of all care and misery. Whether the sick man did most of all, or did at all desire, or expect this at the hands of Jesus Christ, we cannot tell ; but if he thought not of it, (and we see no other,) Oh, what a surprise of love ! It is good, coming to Jesus on any terms, or any errand. Some come, driven by outward afflictions, and yet return delivered from sin and eternal death. In this respect, there is great variety in this matter of declaring a pardon. Some seek and knock, and wait long, and hear it not. Others are prevented, who scarcely sought it, but Christ's first word to them is this. But all is one as to the main :

they who seek it with sorrow, shall be sure to find it with joy ; and they who first find it without previous sorrow, shall yet be sure to find that sorrow for sin, in some measure, likewise, after pardon, if not before. And truly it seems sweetest and kindest, when mercy melts the heart. But well may He say, *Be of good courage*, who could add this, *Thy sins be forgiven thee*. Oh ! what can dismay after this ? The heart, wholly filled with divine peace and love, bears up all, and sorrow is turned into joy before a soul thus assured. Jesus knew well, that the healing of his palsy, without this pardon, had been but a lame cure, only the half, and the far less, the meaner half. This was the main business that brought him down from Heaven to be a man, and to dwell among men, and that made him die for man ; that which nailed him to the cross, and drew forth his heart's blood : it was for the remission of the sins of many. These cures of bodily diseases, though clear demonstrations of Christ's divine power and goodness, were both a transient appendage and symbol of that mainly intended and highest mercy, *the forgiveness of sins*.

The sentence of eternal death standing in full force above the head of an unpardoned sinner, if it were lively apprehended, Oh ! what a paralytic trembling would it strike the soul into, causing the joints of it to shake and smite one upon another, in the midst of its fullest health and mirth, as the hand-writing on the wall did that drunken king Belshazzar. But we know not what sin is, though we hear and speak of it, and sometimes confess it ; and therefore our hearts leap not at the report of a pardon, though we hear of it, and usually entreat it. Any of you, when complaining that you are robbed, or spoiled of your goods, would scarcely think it to the purpose were I to tell you, *Your sins are pardoned*. But Oh ! how fit a word it is to answer and drown all griefs ; so pertinent that nothing besides it is so ! And happy that soul that hears it from His mouth who gives it, and who alone can ascertain it. This is the answer that will satisfy. If thou sayest, " I am diseased ;" ay, but thy sin is pardoned. " I am poor ;" ay, but thy sin is pardoned. And surely, a soul that heeds it right, will be quieted, and will be bold, *of good courage*, as the word here is, and will embrace all other burdens, and go light under them ; will say, Lord, now let me live, or let me die, let me abound or want, let me be healthy or sick, take away what thou wilt, or lay on what thou wilt, all is well ; Thou hast pardoned my sin.

#### Sitting at the Receipt of Custom.

This is the common case, the posture of calling sinners. While they are thinking of no such thing, but altogether drowned in other desires and cares, (even at the church, their hearts are often

more in their shops, or fields, or any earthly business they are engaged in,) their very hearts being a little custom-house, such a crowd and noise of cares and vanities, as there is usually of people in a custom-house. He who hath their names in His book of life, at His appointed time glances at them, by a powerful look cast on them, and, by a word spoken to them, draws them to Himself: and that without minding any previous worth or congruous disposition in them, more than in others; yea, finding them in a more indisposed temper and posture, possibly, than many others who are not called, as the Evangelist here freely and humbly declares of himself, speaking out his calling, and his busy diligence in it, in the very instant that he is called from it. Observe, likewise, his expressing of his common name, Matthew; whereas the other Evangelist, in the recital of this story, gives him that other name which was the more honorable, Levi. *Sitting at the receipt of custom*, a profession of great gain, but little credit among the Jews; and though, possibly, not utterly unlawful in the nature of it, yet, so generally corrupt in the exercise and management of it; like some other callings, which, though a man cannot absolutely determine them to be unlawful, are yet seldom or never lawfully and spotlessly discharged. Therefore, the Jews shunned the very society of publicans (tax-gatherers) as a wicked, execrable kind of men, and did in a manner necessitate them to converse with the worst sort of persons, as being expelled and generally avoided by all others; so that you find them here, ver. 10, and usually in the Gospel, linked together, *publicans* and *sinners*, that is, noted, nefarious sinners, such as harlots, and other scandalously vicious persons. Yet from this stained and ill-reputed calling, is Matthew called by the holy Lord, to follow him. As he called poor fishermen, and made them *fishers of men*, to catch men, to save them by their net spread, the word of life preached, so he calls a rich publican to be a gatherer-in of his tribute and treasure in the world, the souls of chosen sinners, by the publication of the Gospel.

No rank of men is so low, as to be below the condescension of His choice and grace; and none are so remote, in the reputed or real iniquity of their station or person, as to be without the extent and reach of His saving hand. And He is pleased to give instances of this in choosing whom He will, and making them what He will, that *no flesh may glory before him*, but that all flesh may glorify Him, whom no unworthiness or unfitness can prejudice, either in the freedom of his grace in choosing them, or in the power of His grace in changing the mind and fitting them for what he calls them to. He hath no need, nor takes notice of our rules, nor judges according to our thoughts. Not only have we here a publican, but afterwards a persecutor, made a most eminent preacher and apostle of Jesus Christ. And His choice and



calling wipes out the stain of all preceding sin, though the persons themselves do readily acknowledge it on all occasions, as St. Paul often does, and St. Matthew does here. And indeed it is sincerity and humility for them who are converted, at a great distance of time so to do. But for others to object to them after their conversion, either the meanness or the sinfulness of their former lives, were great uncharity and folly: it were to reckon up to men that which God hath blotted out, who alone is interested in the account.

Herein God is wonderful, who seizeth on some persons in the midst of youthful dissipations, or violent pursuits of the world, and purifies them for Himself; makes them not only vessels of honor, but of the first rank, to bear His name to others; make them eminently holy, gives them great abilities, and, which is the top of all abilities, ardent love, and mighty affection for His service. His spirit, that holy fire, refined gross earth into the pureness of transparent glass, to be the inlet of light to His people.

Now, why is this one taken from the custom-house, and so many others left, both there and elsewhere, round about him? This is *arcanum imperii*, a *state secret*: no reason is to be expected but His good pleasure. Why is such a poor creature in a cottage chosen, and great palaces passed by? Why are simple and unlettered persons taught the mysteries of Heaven, and great wits left to evaporate themselves upon vain loves, and other like follies? Why in the same house is one chosen and called, and it may be a servant, and the rest passed by? Nothing can be given in answer but this: *Even so, Father, because it pleaseth Thee.*

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#### FROM ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON'S SERMONS.

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##### Heavenly Wisdom.

Our Apostle, speaking of that wicked wisdom that is fruitful of wrongs, strifes, and debates, and that is only abusively to be called *wisdom*, shews what kind of wisdom it is, by three notable characters, *earthly*, *natural*, and *devilish*; which though they be here jointly attributed to one and the same subject, yet we may make use of them to signify some differences of false wisdom. There is an *infernal*, or *devilish wisdom*, proper for contriving cruelties and oppressions, or subtle shifts and deceits that make atheism a main basis and pillar of state policy: such as those *that devise mischief*

upon their beds, &c. Mic. ii. 1. This is a *serpentine wisdom*, not joined with, but most opposite to the *dove-like simplicity*. There is an *earthly wisdom* that draws not so deep in impiety as that other, yet is sufficient to keep a man out of all acquaintance with God and Divine matters, and is drawing his eye perpetually downwards, employing him in the pursuit of such things as cannot fill the soul, except it be with anguish and vexation. *By thy great wisdom, and by thy traffic hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches.* Ezek. xxviii. 5. That dexterity of gathering riches, where it is not attended with the Christian art of rightly using them, abases men's souls, and indisposes them wholly for this *wisdom that is from above*. There is a *natural wisdom* far more plausible than the other two, more harmless than that hellish wisdom, and more refined than that earthly wisdom, yet no more able to make man holy and happy than they are: *Natural*, it is the word the Apostle St. Paul useth. 1 Cor. ii., naming the *natural man* by his better part, his soul: intimating that the soul, even in the highest faculty of it, the understanding, and that in the highest pitch of excellency to which nature can raise it, is blind in spiritual objects. Things that are above, cannot be known but by a *wisdom from above*. Nature neither affords this wisdom, nor can it of itself acquire it. This is to advertise us, that we mistake not *morality and common knowledge*, even of Divine things, for *the wisdom that is from above*. That may raise a man high above the vulgar, as the tops of the highest mountains leave the valleys below them; yet is it still as far short of true supernatural wisdom, as the highest earth is of the highest sphere. There is one main point of the method of this wisdom that is of most hard digestion to a natural man, and the more natural wise he be, the worse he likes it: *If any man would be wise, let him become a fool that he may become wise.* 1 Cor. iii. 18. There is nothing gives nature a greater prejudice against religion, than this initial point of self-denial. When men of eminent learning, or the strong politicians, hear that, if they will come to Christ, they must renounce their own wisdom to be fit for his, many of them go away as sorrowful as the young man when he heard of selling all his goods and giving them to the poor.

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This wisdom represents to us, the *purity* of God's nature. 1 John iii. 3. It gives the soul an eye to see the comeliness and beauty of *purity*: as the philosopher said of virtue, to the end it might be loved, he would wish no more but that it could be seen. And as it thus morally persuades, so, by an insensible virtue, it assimilates the soul to Christ, by frequent contemplation. It also produces all the motives to holiness and obedience; it begets these precious qualities in the soul. It giveth a Christian a view of the matchless virtues that are in Christ, and stirs him up to a

diligent, though imperfect imitation of them. It sets before us Christ's spotless *purity*, in whose mouth there was no guile, and so invites us to *purity*. It represents the perpetual calmness of His spirit, that no tempest could reach to disturb it: *In his mouth there was no contentious noise, his voice was not heard in the streets*: and this recommends *peaceableness*, and *gentleness*. And so in the rest here mentioned.

Hence, I conceive, may be fitly learned for our use, that seeing here is a due wisdom and knowledge necessary for guidance and direction in the ways of *purity* and *peace*, it is evident that gross ignorance cannot consist with the truth of religion, much less can it be a help and advantage to it. I shall never deny that a false, superstitious religion stands in need of it: "Not too much scripture wisdom for the people." The pomp of that vain religion, like court masks, shews best by candle-light. Fond nature likes it well: the day of spiritual wisdom would discover its imposture too clearly. But to let their foul devotion pass, (for such it must needs be that is born of so black a mother as ignorance,) let this *wisdom* at least be *justified* of those that pretend to be *her children*. It is lamentable that amongst us, where knowledge is not withheld, men should, through sloth and love of darkness, deprive themselves of it. What abundance of almost brutish ignorance is amongst the commons! and thence arise uncleanness, and all manner of wickedness: a darkness that both hides and increaseth impurity. What is the reason of so much impiety and iniquity in all places, but the want of the knowledge of God? *Not knowing Jesus Christ, and not obeying his gospel*, are joined together. Hosea iv. 1, 2; 2 Thess. i. 8. It will be found true, that where there is no obedience, there is no right knowledge of Christ. But out of all question, where there is not a competency of knowledge, there can be no obedience. And as these two lodge together, so observe what attends them both. *He shall come in flaming fire to render vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

And if there be any that think to shroud unpunished amongst the thickets of ignorance, especially amidst the means of knowledge, take notice of this; though it may hide the deformity of sin from your own sight for a time, it cannot palliate it from the piercing eye, nor cover it from the revenging hand of Divine Justice. As you would escape, then, that wrath to come, come to wisdom's school, and how simple soever ye be as to this world, if you would not perish with the world, learn to be *wise unto salvation*.

And truly, it is mainly important for this effect, that the ministers of the Gospel be active and dexterous in imparting this wisdom to their people. If they would have their conversation to be holy, and peaceable, and fruitful, &c., the most expedient way is

at once to principle them well in the fundamentals of religion ; for therein is their great defect. How can they walk evenly and regularly, so long as they are in the dark ? One main thing is, to be often pointing at the way to Christ, the fountain of this wisdom. Without this, you bid them be clothed, and clothe them not.

How needful then is it, that pastors themselves be *Seers* indeed, as the prophets were called of old ; not only faithful but *wise* dispensers, as our Saviour speaks, Luke xii. 42, that they be *able and apt to teach*. 1 Tim. iii. 2. Laudable is the prudence that tries much the churches' storehouses, the seminaries of learning ; but withal, it is not to be forgot, that as a due furniture of learning is very requisite for this employment, so it is not sufficient. When one is duly enriched that way, there is yet one thing wanting, that grows not in schools ; except this infused *wisdom from above* season and sanctify all other endowments, they remain common and unholy, and therefore unfit for the sanctuary. Amongst other weak pretences to Christ's favor in the last day, this is one, *We have preached in thy name* ; yet says Christ, *I never knew you*. Surely, then, they knew not him, and yet they preached him. Cold and lifeless (though never so fine and well contrived) must those discourses be, that are of an *unknown Christ*. Pastors are called angels, and therefore, though they use the secondary helps of knowledge, they are mainly to bring their message from above, from the Fountain, the Head of this pure wisdom.

#### Complaints of Sinfulness.

After these, there follow a few despised and melancholy persons, (at least as to outward appearance,) who are almost always hanging down their heads, and complaining of abundant sinfulness. And surely, purity cannot be expected in these who are so far from it by their own confession ; yet the truth is, that such purity as is here below, will either be found to lodge among these, or no where. Be not deceived ; think not that they who loath, and (as they can) flee from the unholiness of the world, are therefore taken with the conceit of their own holiness : but as their perfect purity of justification is by Christ's imputed righteousness, so likewise they will know, and do always acknowledge, that their inherent holiness is *from above* too, from the same fountain, Jesus Christ. The wisdom *from above* is pure : this is their engagement to humility, for it excludes vaunting and boasting ; and besides that, it is imperfect, troubled and stained with sin, which is enough to keep them humble. Their daily sad experience will not suffer them to be so mistaken : their many faults of infirmity cannot but keep them from this presumptuous fault. There is *a generation*, indeed, *that are pure in their own eyes*, but they are



such as *are not washed from their filth*. Prov. xxx. 12. They that are washed, are still bewailing that they again contract so much defilement. The most purified Christians are they that are most sensible of their impurity. Therefore I called not this a universal freedom from pollution, but a universal detestation of it. They that are thus pure, are daily defiled with many sins, but they cannot be in love with any sin at all, nor do they willingly dispense with the smallest sins, which a natural man either sees not to be sin, (though his dim moonlight discover grosser evils,) or, if he do see them, yet he judges it too much niceness to choose a great inconvenience rather than a little sin. Again, they differ in another particular: a natural man may be so far in love with virtue after his manner, as to dislike his own faults and resolve to amend them; but yet, he would think it a great weakness to sit down and mourn for sin, *and to afflict his soul*, as the Scripture speaks. The Christian's repentance goes not so lightly; there is a great deal more work in it. There is not only *indignation* against impurity, but it proceeds to *vengeance*. 2 Cor. vii. 11. The saints we read of in Scripture, were ashamed of their impurity, but never of their tears for it. Let the world enjoy their own thoughts, and account it folly, yet surely, the Christian who delights in purity, seeing he cannot be free from daily sin, when he retires himself at night, is then best contented when his eyes serve him most plentifully to weep out the stains of the by-past day; yet he knows withal, that it is only his Redeemer's blood that takes away the guilt of them. This is the condition of those that are truly, though not yet fully, cleansed from the pollutions of the world by the Spirit of wisdom and purity. What mean they, then, who would argue themselves out of this number, because they find yet much dross left, and that they are not so defecated and refined as they would wish to be? On the contrary, this hatred of pollution testifies strongly that the contrary of it, *purity*, is there; and though its beginnings be small, doubt not, it shall in the end be victorious. The *smoking* of this *flax* shews indeed that there is gross matter there, but it witnesseth likewise that there is fire in it too, and though it be little, we have Christ's own word for it, that it shall not be *quenched*; and if He favor it, no other power shall be able to quench it. You find not, indeed, absolute holiness in your persons, nor in your best performances, yet, if you breathe and follow after it, if the pulse of the heart beat thus, if the main current of your affections be towards purity, if sin be in you as your disease and greatest grief, and not as your delight, then, take courage; you are as pure as travellers can be; and notwithstanding that impure spirit, Satan, and the impurity of your own spirits, vex you daily with temptations, and often foil you, yet, in despite of them all, you shall arrive safe at home where perfection dwells.

## The Wisdom from above is pure.

Be ashamed, then, of your extreme folly, you that take pleasure in any kind of uncleanness. Especially, seeing God hath reformed and purged His House amongst us, you that are, or should be, His living temples, remain not unreformed. If you do, Church reformation will be so far from profiting you, that as a clearer light, it will but serve to make your impurity both more visible and more inexcusable. If you mean that the Holy Ghost should dwell with you, entertain Him, avoiding both spiritual and fleshly pollutions. The word here used doth more particularly signify *chastity*; and certainly, wherever this *wisdom from above* is, this comely grace is one of her attendants. Whatever any have been in times past, let all be persuaded henceforth to mortify all lustful and carnal affections. Know that there is more true and lasting pleasure in the contempt of unlawful pleasures, than in the enjoyment of them. Grieve not, then, the good Spirit of God with actions or speeches, yea, or with thoughts that are impure. The unholy soul, like the mystical Babylon, makes itself a cage of unclean birds, and a habitation of filthy spirits; and if it continues to be such, it must, when it dislodges, take up its habitation with cursed spirits forever in utter darkness. But as for those that are sincerely and affectionately *pure*, that is, *pure in heart*, our Saviour hath pronounced their begun happiness—*Blessed are they that are pure in heart*, and assured them of full happiness—*for they shall see God*. This wisdom is sent from Heaven on purpose to guide the elect thither by the way of purity. And mark how well their reward is suited to their labor: their frequent contemplating and beholding of God's purity as they could, while they were on their journey, and their laboring to be like Him, shall bring them to sit down in glory, and to be forever the pure beholders of that purest object. *They shall see God*. What this is, we cannot tell you, nor can you conceive it; but walk heavenwards in purity, and long to be there, where you shall know what it means; *For you shall see Him as He is*.

## Heavenly Meditation.

It is a rare, infrequent thing, this communing of the heart with God, speaking its thoughts to Him concerning itself, and concerning Him and His dealings with it, and the purposes and intentions it hath towards Him,—which is the speech here recommended, and is that Divine exercise of meditation and soliloquy of the soul with itself and with God, hearkening what the Lord God speaks to us within us, and our hearts echoing and resounding his words, (as Psalm xxvii. 8, 9,) and opening to Him our thoughts of them and of ourselves. Though they stand open, and He sees them all,

even when we tell Him not of them, yet, because He loves us, He loves to hear them of our own speaking : *Let me hear thy voice, for it is sweet* ; as a father delights in the little stammering, lisping language of his beloved child. And if the reflex affection of children be in us, we shall love also to speak with *our* Father, and to tell Him all our mind, and to be often with Him in the entertainments of our secret thoughts.

But the most men are little within : either they wear out their hours in vain discourse with others, or possibly vainer discourses with themselves. Even those who are not of the worst sort, and who, possibly, have their times of secret prayer, yet do not so delight to think of God, and to speak with Him, as they do to be conversant in other affairs, and companies, and discourses, in which there is a great deal of froth and emptiness. Men think, by talking of many things, to be refreshed ; and yet, when they have done, find that it is nothing, and that they had much better have been alone, or have said nothing. Our thoughts and speeches in most things, run to waste, yea, are defiled ; as water spilt on the ground is both lost, and cannot be gathered up again, and is polluted, mingled with dust. But no word spoken to God, from the serious sense of a holy heart, is lost : he receives it, and returns it into our bosom with advantage. A soul that delights to speak to Him, will find that He also delights to speak to it. And this communication, certainly, is the sweetest and happiest choice ; to speak little with men, and much with God. One short word, such as this here, spoken to God in a darted thought, eases the heart more when it is afflicted, than the largest discourses and complainings to the greatest and powerfulest of men, or the kindest and most friendly. It gives not only ease, but joy, to say to God, *I have sinned, yet I am thine* ; or, as here, *I have borne chastisement, I will no more offend*. The time of affliction is peculiarly a time of speaking to God ; and such speech, as this is peculiarly befitting such a time. And this is one great recommendation of affliction, that it is a time of wiser and more sober thoughts—a time of the returning of the mind inwards and upwards. A high place, fulness and pleasure, draw the mind more outwards. Great light and white colors dissipate the sight of the eye, and the very thoughts of the mind too ; and men find that the night is a fitter season for deep thoughts. *It is better*, says Solomon, *to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting*. Those blacks made the mind more serious. It is a rare thing to find much retirement unto God, much humility and brokenness of spirit, true purity and spirituality of heart, in the affluence and great prosperities of the world. It is no easy thing to carry a very full cup even, and to digest well the fatness of a great estate and great place. They are not to be envied who have them : even though they be of the better sort of men, it is a thousand to one but they shall be losers by the gains and advance-

ments of this world, suffering proportionably great abatements of their best advantages, by their prosperity. The generality of men, while they are at ease, do securely neglect God, and little mind either to speak to Him, or to hear Him speak to them. God complains thus of His own people : *I spoke to them in their prosperity, and they would not hear.* The noises of coach-wheels, of their pleasures, and of their great affairs, so fill their ears, that the *still voice* wherein God is, cannot be heard. *I will bring her into the wilderness, and there I will speak to her heart,* says God of His Church. There the heart is more at quiet to hear God, and to speak to Him, and is disposed to speak in the style here prescribed, humbly and repentingly.

I have borne Chastisement.

The speaking this unto God under affliction signifies, that our affliction is from His hand ; and to the acknowledgement of this truth, the very natural consciences of men do incline them. Though trouble be the general lot of mankind, yet it doth not come on him by an improvidential fatality : though *man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards*, yet it comes not out of the dust. Job v. 6, 7. It is no less true, and in itself no less clear, that all the good we enjoy, and all the evil we suffer, come from the same Hand ; but we are naturally more sensible of evil than of good, and therefore do more readily reflect upon the original and causes of it. Our distresses lead us to the notice of the righteous God inflicting them, and of our own unrighteousness ways procuring them, and provoking Him so to do ; and therefore it is *meet* to speak in this submissive, humble language to Him. It is by all means necessary to *speak* to Him. He is the party we have to deal withal, or to speak to, even in those afflictions whereof men are the intervenient visible causes. They are, indeed, but instrumental causes, the *rod and staff* in His hand who smites us ; therefore, our business is with *Him*, in whose Supreme Hand alone the mitigations and increases, the continuance and the ending, of our troubles lie. *Who gave Jacob to the spoil, and Israel to the robbers ? Did not the Lord, against whom we have sinned ?* Isa. xlii. 24. So Lam. i. 14, *The yoke of my transgressions is bound on by His hand.* Therefore, it is altogether necessary in all afflictions to *speak* to *Him*. And as it is necessary to speak to Him, so it is *meet* to speak thus to Him *I have borne chastisement, I will no more offend.* These words have in them the true composition of real repentance, humble submission and holy resolution. *I have borne chastisement*—that is, I have justly borne it, and do heartily submit to it ; I bear it justly, and take it well ; Lord, I acquit thee, and accuse myself. This language becomes the most innocent persons in the world in their suffering. Job knew it well, and did often acknowledge it in his preceding speeches.



Though sometimes, in the heat of dispute, and in opposition to the uncharitable and unjust imputations of his friends, he seems to overstrain the assertion of his own integrity (which Elihu here corrects,) you know he cries out, *I have sinned against Thee: what shall I do unto Thee, O Thou preserver of men?* Job vii. 20. And chap. ix. ver. 30, *If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.*

What I see not, teach Thou me.

This is a very necessary supplication, even for the most discerning and clearest-sighted penitent, both in reference to the commandment and rule for discovering the general nature and several kinds of sin, and withal for the application of this general light to the examination of a man's own heart and ways, that so he may have a more exact and particular account of his own sins.

The former part of the petition is for the knowledge of the law of God, as the rule by which a man is to try and to judge himself. The most knowing are not above the need of this request; yea, I am persuaded, the most knowing know best how much they need it, and are most humbled in themselves in the conscience of their ignorance and darkness in Divine things, and are most earnest and pressing in this daily supplication for increases of light and spiritual knowledge from Him who is the Fountain of it: *What I see not, teach Thou me.* On the other side, the least knowing are often the most confident that they know all, and swelled with a conceited sufficiency of their model and determination of all things, both dogmatical and practical; and therefore are they the most imperious and magisterial in their conclusions, and the most impatient of contradiction, or even of the most modest dissent.

The wisest and holiest persons speak always in the humblest and most depressing style of their own knowledge, and that not with an affectation of modesty, but under the real sense of the thing as it is, and the sincere account they give of it, and that commonly when they are declaring themselves most solemnly, as in the sight of God, or speaking in supplication to Him with whom they dare least of all dissemble. Whosoever he was that spake those words, in the thirtieth chapter of Proverbs, surely he was a man of eminent wisdom and piety, and yet he begins thus: *Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man; I have neither learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy.* And though he was so diligent a student, and so great a proficient in the law of God, yet, how importunate a petitioner is he for the understanding of it, as if he knew nothing at all! Besides the like expressions in other Psalms, in that one Psalm, [the cxix.] which, although of such length, hath nothing but the breathing

forth of his affection to the word and law of God, how often doth David in it reiterate that petition, *Teach me thy statutes!*—so often, that a carnal mind is tempted to grow weary of it, as a nauseating tautology; but he made it still new with the freshness and vehemency of his affection: *Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts—Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law—and Open Thou mine eyes, that I may see the wonders of Thy law,*—unseal mine eyes, as if they were still veiled and dark. These are the earnest and nobly ambitious desires that daily solicit holy hearts, and stir them up to solicit the Teacher of hearts, to be admitted more into the secrets and recesses of Divine knowledge; not to those abysses that God intends should be secret still, and from which He hath barred out our curiosity, as the forbidden tree of knowledge, those secrets that belong to Himself alone, and concern us not to inquire after. And certainly, to be wading in those deeps, is the way to be drowned in them. *The searcher of majesty shall be oppressed with glory.* Yet, there is in man, a perverse, preposterous desire, to pore upon such things as are on purpose hidden that we should not inquire after them, and to seek after useless, empty speculations of them, which is a luxury and intemperance of the understanding, like unto that, and springing from that, which at first undid us in the root. These are times full of those empty, airy questions, and notions in which there is no clearness nor certainty to be attained, and if it were, yet it would serve to little or no purpose, not making the man who thinks he hath found them out, one jot the better or holier man than he was before. *What awaits it, says a devout author, to dispute and discourse high concerning the Trinity, and want humility, and so displease that Trinity?* The light and knowledge suited according to the intendment of this copy, is of nature, such as purifies the heart and rectifies the life. *What I see not, teach Thou me;* that is, of such things as may serve this end, that *if I have done iniquity, I may do it no more.* This is sound and solid knowledge, such a light as inflames the heart with the love of God and of the beauties of holiness, and still, as it grows, makes those to grow likewise. Such are still, we see, David's multiplied supplications in that cxix. Psalm; not to know reserved and useless things, but, *Hide not thy commandments from me. Thy hands have made me and fashioned me:* now, what is it that Thy creature and workmanship begs of Thee? What is that which will complete my being, and make me do honor to my Maker? This is it,—*Give me understanding, that I may learn Thy commandments.*

#### The Worship of God in the Sanctuary.

There is no exercise so delightful to those that are truly godly, as the solemn worship of God, if they find His powerful and sen-

sible presence in it; and indeed there is nothing on earth more like to heaven than that is. But when He withdraws Himself, and withholds the influence and breathings of His Spirit in his service, then good souls find nothing more lifeless and uncomfortable. But there is this difference, even at such a time, betwixt them and those that have no spiritual life in them at all, that they find, and are sensible of this difference; whereas the others know not what it means. And for the most part, the greatest number of those that meet together with a profession to worship God, yet are such as do not understand this difference. Custom and formality draw many to the ordinary places of public worship, and fill too much of the room; and sometimes novelty and curiosity, drawing to places not ordinary, have a large share: but how few are there that come on purpose to meet with God in His worship, and to find His power in strengthening their weak faith, and weakening their strong corruptions, affording them provision of spiritual strength and comfort against times of trial, and, in a word, advancing them some steps forward in their journey towards Heaven, where happiness and perfection dwell! Certainly, these sweet effects are to be found in these ordinances, if we would look after them. Let it grieve us then, that we have so often lost our labor in the worship of God through our own neglect, and entreat the Lord, that at this time He would not send us away empty. For how weak soever the means be, if He put forth His strength, the work shall be done, in some measure, to His glory and our edification. Now that He may be pleased to do so, to leave a blessing behind Him, let us pray, &c.

The Times of the Church in the hands of God.

That sovereign Lord, who at first set up the lights of heaven to distinguish times and seasons by their constant motion, and likewise by His supreme providence ruling the world, hath fixed the periods of states and kingdom, and decreed their revolutions, their rising, ascending, and their height, with their decline and sitting, hath by a special providence determined those changes and vicissitudes that befall His Church. That which the Psalmist speaks, in his own particular, Psal. xxxi. 15, holds of each believer, and of the Church which they make up in all ages and places: *I said, Thou art my God, my times are in Thy hand.* A sure and steady hand indeed, and therefore he builds his confidence upon it, ver. 13. *They took counsel against me, but I trusted in thee.* And upon this, he prays in faith, that the face of God may shine upon him, and the wicked may be ashamed.

Thus, then, as many of you as are looking after a day of mercy to the Church of God, pray and believe upon this ground, That the time of it is neither in the frail hands of those that favor and



seek it, nor in the hands of those that oppose it, how strong and subtle soever they be, but in His almighty hand, who doth in heaven and earth what pleaseth Him. If he have said, *Now*, and *here*, will I give a day of refreshment to my people who have long groaned for it, a day of the purity and power of religion; if, I say, this be *His* purpose, they must have somewhat more than omnipotence, who can hinder it. When His appointed time comes, to make a day of deliverance dawn upon His Church, after their long night either of affliction or of defection, or both; they who contrive against that day-spring, are as vain as if they would sit down to plot how to hinder the sun from rising in the morning. And they who let go their hopes of it, because of great apparent difficulties that interpose betwixt their eye and the accomplishment of that work, are as weak as if they should imagine, when mists and thick vapors appear about the horizon in the morning, that these could hinder the rising of the sun, which is so far out of their reach, and *comes forth as a bridegroom, and rejoices as a mighty man to run his race*, says David. Those mists may indeed hinder his clear appearance, and keep it from the eye for a time; but reason tells us, even then, that they cannot stop his course. And faith assures us no less in the other case, that no difficulties can hold back God's day and work of mercy to His people. But you will say, All the difficulty is, to know whether the appointed time be near or not. It is true, we have no particular prophecies to assure us; but certainly, when God *awakes* His children and makes them *rise*, this is a probable sign that it is near day. I mean, when He stirs them up to more than usual hopes, and prayers, and endeavors, it is very likely that He intends them some special good. But yet more, when He Himself is *arisen*, (as it pleaseth Him to speak,) that is, when He is begun to appear, in a more than ordinary manner of working by singular and wonderful footsteps of providence, this is, no doubt, a sign that He will go on to shew remarkable mercy to *Sion*, and that *the time to favor her, yea, the set time is come*. Psal. cii. 13.

#### The true Glory of the Church.

If it be thus, that the purity of religion and worship, is *the crown and glory* of a people; and therefore, on the other side, that their deepest stain of dishonor and vileness, is the vitiating of religion with human devices; then, to contend for the preservation or the reformation of it, is noble and worthy of a Christian. It is for the crown of Jesus Christ, which is likewise a *crown of glory* and a *diadem of beauty* to them, He being their head. It is, indeed, the true glory both of kings and their kingdoms. Labor, then, for constancy in this work: let no man take your crown from you. You know how busy the emissaries of the Church of



Rome have been to take it from us, or, at least, to pick the diamonds out of it, and put in false, counterfeit ones in their places. I mean, they stole away the power of religion, and filled up the room with shadows and fopperies of their own devising. It is the vanity of that church to think they adorn the worship of God when they dress it up with splendor in her service, which, though some magnify it so much, yet may most truly be called a glistening slavery and captivity. Then is she truly free, and wears her crown, when the ordinances of God are conformable to His own appointment. It is vanity in man, I say, when they dress it up with a multitude of gaudy ceremonies, and make *it* the smallest part of *itself*; whereas, indeed, its true glory consists not in pomp, but in purity and simplicity. In the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse, we find the Church, under the name of a woman, richly attired, indeed, but her ornaments be all heavenly; *the sun* her clothing, and her crown *of twelve stars*. Needs she, then, borrow sublunary glory? No, she treads upon it: *the moon* is *under her feet*. There is another woman, indeed, in that same book, *arrayed in purple and scarlet, decked with gold and precious stones*, and *having a golden cup in her hand*, but that golden cup is *full of abominations and filthiness*, and she herself the *mother of abominations*. Apoc. xvii. 4. The natural man judges according to his reach; but to a spiritual eye there is a most genuine beauty in the service of God and the government of His house; and when they are nearest to the rule, the word of God, then is it that the Lord himself is *the crown and diadem* of His Church.

#### Insincerity in Public Worship.

External worship doth openly acknowledge a Deity, but want of inward sense in worship secretly denieth it: *the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God*. It is strange to hear so much noise of religion in the world, and to find so little piety. To present the living God with a carcass of lifeless worship, is to pay Him with shells of services, and so to mock Him. And it is a more admirable long-suffering in Him to defer the punishment of such devotion, than of all the other sins in the world. The Egyptian temples were rich and stately fabrics: a stranger who had looked upon them without, would have imagined some great deity within; but if they entered, (as Lucian says, laughing at them,) nothing was to be seen, but only some ape, or cat, or pied bull, or some other fine god like those. To behold our fair semblance of religion who frequent this house, it would appear that we were all the temples of the Holy Ghost; but whoso could look within us, would find in many of our hearts lust, pride, avarice, or some such like secret vice adored as a god. And these are they which,

while our bodies sit here, do alienate our souls from the service of the Eternal God, so that we are either altogether senseless and dead before Him, or, if any fit of spiritual motion rise within us, we find it here, and here we leave it, as if it were sacrilege to take it home with us. But did once that Spirit of Grace breathe savingly upon our souls, we should straight renounce and abhor those base idols, and then all the current of our affection would run more in this channel : our services would then be spiritual, and it would be our Heaven upon earth, to view God in his sanctuary. And the obtaining of the change, is, or should be, one main end of this our meeting ; and, that it may be the happy effect of it, our recourse must be to the throne of grace by humble prayer, in the name of our Mediator, *Jesus Christ, the righteous.*

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*Arise, then, for the glory of the Lord is risen.* The day of the Gospel is too precious that any of it should be spent in sleep, or idleness, or worthless business. Worthless business detains many of us. *Arise, immortal souls, from turmoil in the dust, and working in the clay like Egyptian captives.* Address yourselves to more noble work. There is a Redeemer come, who will pay your ransom, and rescue you from such vile service, for more excellent employment. It is strange how the souls of Christians can so much forget their first original from Heaven, and their new hopes of returning thither, and the rich price of their redemption, and forgetting all these dwell so low, and dote so much upon trifles. How is it that they hear not their well beloved's voice crying, *Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away?* Though the eyes of true believers are so enlightened, that they shall not sleep unto death, yet their spirits are often seized with a kind of drowsiness and slumber, and sometimes even when they should be of most activity. The time of Christ's check to his three disciples, made it very sharp, though the words are mild : *What! could you not watch with me one hour?* Shake off, believing souls, that heavy humor. *Arise, and satiate the eye of faith with the contemplation of Christ's beauty, and follow after him till you attain the place of full enjoyment.* And you others who never yet saw him, *arise, and admire his matchless excellency.* The things you esteem great, appear so but through ignorance of his greatness. His brightness, if you saw it, would obscure to you the greatest splendor of the world, as all those stars that go never down upon us, yet they are swallowed up in the surpassing light of the sun when it arises. *Stand up from the dead, and He shall give you light. Arise and work while it is day, for the night shall come wherein none can work,* says our Saviour himself. Happy are they who rise early in the morning of their youth ; for the day of life is very short, and the art of Christianity long and

difficult. Is it not a grievous thing, that men never consider why they came into the world, till they be upon the point of going out again, nor think how to live, till they be summoned to die? But most of all unhappy, he who never wakens out of that pleasing dream of false happiness, till he falls into eternal misery. *Arise*, then, betimes, and prevent that sad awakening.

And being risen, *put on your beautiful garments*. Isa. lii. 1. Draw towards you with the hand of faith the rich mantle of Christ's righteousness. *It is time to awake*, says the Apostle, and presently after, *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ*. Rom. xiii. 11, 14. And it is a wonder how a sinner can rest, while he is out of this garment; for there is no other in heaven nor on earth, can make him shine to God, and so shelter him from the stroke of justice. Put him on then, and so shine: being thus clothed, thou shalt shine in justification, and likewise in sanctity. What a privilege is it, to be like God! A sanctified conscience, what can be said against it? And first have an enlightened understanding, for that is the proper seat of light. That ignorant zeal which Rome commends, exposes religion to scorn and contempt. Heat without light, is the character of the fire of hell. I know, all are not tied to a like degree of knowledge, but certainly, all are obliged to have a competency, and diligence for increase. Aspire, then, to be intelligent Christians, and to know well what you believe. Let your minds be *filled with knowledge*, as the Apostle speaks. But let it not stop there; it must have influence into the will. *Lux est vehiculum caloris*: True light conveys heat. All the knowledge that the natural man hath of Christ, not warming his affection to Christ, is but *ignis fatuus*, a vain light, it shall never lead him to happiness. Saving light produces love, and by that acts. *Faith works by love*, says the Apostle. That breaks forth and shines in the life, in godliness, righteousness, and sobriety. Shine, then, in all these; first, in piety towards God, for this is the reflection of those rays of light back towards their source, and this will command the other two. No man that shines in godliness, will wallow in injustice and intemperance. Guile and wrong cannot endure the light: they that are unjust cannot shine. And let them never offer to shine among Christians, who are not sober, but stained with riot and uncleanness. These foul enormities lay waste the conscience, and put out the light. How can any seeds of grace subsist undrowned, that are exposed to a daily deluge of cups? How can that pure Spirit that chose the likeness of a chaste dove, dwell and give light in that soul which is a nest of impure and filthy lusts? No; there can be no fellowship betwixt this celestial light, whereby we should shine, and those infernal workings of darkness. Let profane men hold it a chief strain of wit, to scoff at purity, but you who pretend Heaven-ward in good earnest, and mean to shine in glory, shine



here in holiness ; *For without holiness no man shall see God.* And do it with these qualifications : (1.) *Constantly*,—in every estate. Let not this Divine light go out, neither by day in prosperity, nor by night in adversity. In every place. Do not shine clear, and be dark in your chamber : they that do thus, *have their reward.* That is a sad word, if rightly understood. Beware of hypocrisy. (2.) Shine *progressively*, gaining still more and more victory over darkness, till you attain unmixed and perfect light. *The way of the just*, says Solomon, *is like a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* Prov. iv. 18. (3.) Shine *humbly*, to his glory whose light you borrow : not to shew forth your own excellencies, but His, *who hath called you from darkness to His marvellous light.* 1 Peter ii. 9. If we be *children of light*, our brightness must praise the *Father of lights.* *Let your light so shine before men, that they seeing your good works,* (not yourselves, if you can be hid ; as the sun affords its light and will scarce suffer us to look upon itself,) *may glorify* (not you, but) *your heavenly Father.* Matt. v. 6. To conclude,

The pure light of the Church is revived, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you, and upon this glory there shall be a defence. If God be your glory in the midst of you, He will be likewise a wall of fire round about you. All the danger is, if we fall short in the duty of shining. But as you desire that this glory should abide and dwell amongst you, let all estates of men provoke one another to shine bright in holiness. You who either by birth or office are in eminent stations, know that you were set there to be eminent and exemplary in shining, as stars of more notable magnitude. You who are ministers of this light, know that *you are the light of the world* ; and if the very light become darkness, how great will that darkness be ! You that are of a lower order, know that you must shine too ; for it is a common duty. There is a certain company of small stars in the firmament, which, though they cannot be each one severally seen, yet, being many, their united light makes a conspicuous brightness in the heavens, which is called the *milky way* : so, though the shining of every private Christian is not so much severally remarkable, yet, the concourse and meeting of their light together, will make a bright path of holiness shine in the Church.

Now to the end we may each one shine in our measure, we must learn to turn ourselves often towards Him from whom our light is derived. Conversing with Him, will make us more and more like Him. There is a secret unknown virtue for this purpose in secret prayer and meditation. Were we more in the mount with God, our faces would shine more with men. Let us then rescue from the world all the time we can, to resort frequently thither, till such time as the soul, which is now often pulled down again by the flesh, shall let the mantle fall and come down no more, but



shine there without spot, and be forever satisfied with her Maker's image.

### Hypocrisy.

Art imitates nature ; and the nearer it comes to nature in its effects, it is the more excellent. Grace is the new nature of a Christian, and hypocrisy that art which counterfeits it ; and the more exquisite it is in imitation, it is the more plausible to men, but the more abominable to God. It may frame a spiritual man in image so to the life, that not only others, but even the hypocrite himself may admire it, and favoring his own artifice, may be deceived so far, as to say, and think, it lives, and fall in love with it ; but he is no less abhorred by the Searcher of hearts, than pleasing to himself. Surely, this mischief of hypocrisy can never be enough inveighed against. When religion is in request, it is the chief malady of the Church, and numbers die of it ; though, because it is a subtle and inward evil, it be little perceived. It is to be feared there are many sick of it, who look well and comely in God's outward worship, and they may pass well in good weather, in times of peace, but days of adversity are days of trial. The prosperous estate of the Church make hypocrites, and her distress discovers them. But if they escape such trial, there is one inevitable day coming, wherein all secret things shall be made manifest. Men shall be turned inside out : and amongst all sinners that shall then be brought before that judgment-seat, that deformedest sight shall be an unmasked hypocrite, and the heaviest sentence shall be *his* portion.

Oh ! that the consideration of this would scare us out of that false disguise in time, and set us all upon the study of sincerity ! Precious is that grace in God's esteem : a little of it will weigh down mountains of formal religion, in the balance of the sanctuary. Which of us have not now brought hypocrisy, more or less, into the house of God ? Oh, that it were not with intention to nourish it, but with desire to be here cured of it ! For He alone who hates it so much, can cure it ; He alone can confer upon us that sincerity wherein He mainly delights. If we have a mind, indeed, to be endued with it, it is no where else to be had : we must entreat it of God by humble prayer, in the name of His well-beloved Son, by the assistance of His Holy Spirit.

Arise, shine, thy light being come, and the glory of the Lord being risen upon thee.

*Truly, light is sweet, and it is a pleasing thing to behold the sun,* says the Preacher, Eccl. xi. 7. But the interchange of night with day adds to its beauty, and the longest night makes day

the welcomest; as that people well know, whose situation in the world gives them a five or six months' night all of one piece. It is reported of some of them, that when they conceive their night draws towards an end, they put on their richest apparel, and climb up to the highest mountains, with emulation who shall first discover the returning light; which, so soon as it appears, they salute with acclamations of joy, and welcome it with solemn feasting, and all other testimonies of exceeding gladness. But such is the lethargy of sinful man, that he stirs not to meet his spiritual light; and, which is worse, when it comes upon him, it finds him in love with darkness. Instead of his shouts of joy for this light, many a cry must be sounded in his ears, to awaken him; and it is well, too, if at length he hear and obey this voice, *Arise, shine, for thy light is come.*

#### Internal evidence that the Scriptures are the Word of God.

In this elementary world, Light being (as we hear) the first thing visible, all things are seen by it, and it by itself. Thus is Christ among spiritual things, in the elect world of his Church. *All things are made manifest by the Light*, says the Apostle, Ephes. v. 13, speaking of Christ, as the following verse doth evidently testify. It is in his word that he shines, and makes it a directing and convincing light, to discover all things that concern his Church and himself, and to be known by its own brightness. How impertinent, then, is that question so much tossed by the Romish Church, how know you the Scriptures (say they) to be the word of God, without the testimony of the Church? I would ask one of them again, how they can know that it is day-light, except some one light a candle to let them see it. They are little versed in Holy Scripture, who know not that it is frequently called *light*; and they are senseless who know not that light is seen and known by itself. *If our Gospel be hid*, says the Apostle, *it is hid to them that perish, the god of this world having blinded their minds against the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ.* 2. Cor. iv. 3. No wonder if such stand in need of a testimony. A blind man knows not that it is light at noon-day, but by report; but to those that have eyes, light is seen by itself.

#### Christ, the Light of the World.

Light fitly resembles Christ in *purity*: it visits many impure places, and lights upon the basest parts of the earth, and yet remains most pure and undefiled. Christ sees and takes notice of all the enormities and sinful pollutions in the world; as David says of the sun, *there is nothing hid from His beams*; yea, many of those foul evils he cures, and purgeth away these pollutions;

and yet, he is never stained by them in the least degree. He is a physician not capable of infection, and therefore while he dwelt among men, he shunned not publicans and sinners, but sought them rather, for with such was his business and employment. Indeed, for a frail man to be too bold in frequenting profane and obstinate persons, though with intention to reclaim them, is not always so safe. *Metus est ne attrahant.* They may pull him in, who would help them forth, and pollute him who would cleanse them. But our Saviour, the light of the world, runs no such hazard: he is stronger than the perversest sinner, yea, than the prince of darkness himself, over whom his banners are always victorious, and purer than to be in danger of pollution. His precious blood is a *fountain opened for sin and uncleanness*: sinners are purified by it, and it is not defiled by them. Thousands have washed in it, yet it shall abide, and always shall be most perfectly pure. And *such a high priest was needful for us, who is undefiled*, and who, though conversant with sinners, to communicate to them his goodness, was yet *separate from sinners* in immunity from their evil. Heb. vii. 26.

To this agrees well that title which the prophet Malachi gives him, chap. iv. ver. 2, when he calls him the *Sun of righteousness*; full of purity and righteousness, as the sun is of light; all luminous, without spot; subject to no eclipse in himself, his light being his own, though our sins interposed may hide him sometimes from us, as those real eclipses in the sun are rather ours, for we are deprived of light, but not of the sun. Christ is in many ways most fitly called the Sun; for since all created light falls infinitely short of his worth, the prince and chief of lights, the sun, cannot but suit best, so far as may be, to set forth his excellency.

The light of the sun is neither parted nor diminished, by being imparted to many several people and nations that behold it at one time; nor is the righteousness of this Sun of Righteousness either lessened to himself, or to individual believers, by many partaking of it at once: it is wholly conferred upon each one of them, and remains whole in himself. Hence it is, that not only Christ invites so liberally sinners to come to him, but even justified persons would so gladly draw all others to lay hold on this righteousness of their Redeemer; knowing well, that if all the world were enriched by it, they themselves would be no whit the poorer.

#### Christ, the Light and Lustre of the Church.

When the sun takes its course towards us in the season of the year, it drives away the sharp frosts and the heavy fogs of winter, it clears the heavens, decks the earth with variety of plants and flowers, and awakes the birds to the pleasant strains of their natural music. When Christ, after a kind of winter absence, returns

to visit a declining church, admirable is the change that he produces: all begins to flourish by his sweet influence; his house, his worship, his people, are all clothed with a new beauty; but it is spiritual, and therefore, none but spiritual eyes can discern it. When he will thus return, all the power and policy of man can no more hinder him, than it could stay the course of the sun in its circle. In like manner, a deserted, forsaken soul, that can do nothing but languish and droop, while Christ withdraws himself, what inexpressible vigor and alacrity finds it at his returning! Then those graces which, while they lurked, seemed to have been lost and quite extinguished, bud forth anew with pleasant color and fragrant smell. It is the light of His countenance that banisheth their false fears, that strengthens their faith, and cures their spiritual infirmities. This Sun is indeed the sovereign physician: *Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing under his wings.* Mal. iv. 2.

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If we knew him rightly, we would not sell the least glance or beam of this light of his countenance, for the highest favor of mortal man, though it were constant and unchangeable, which it is not. It is ignorance of Christ, that maintains the credit of those vanities we admire. The Christian that is truly acquainted with him, enamoured with the brightness of his beauty, can generously trample upon the smilings of the world with the one foot, and upon her frownings with the other. If he be rich or honorable, or both, yet, he glories not in that, but Christ, who is *the glory of the Lord*, is even then his chiefest glory; and the light of Christ obscures that worldly splendor in his estimation. And as the enjoyment of Christ overtops all his other joys, so it overcomes his griefs. As that great light drowns the light of prosperity, so it shines bright in the darkness of affliction: no dungeon so close that it can keep out the rays of Christ's love from his beloved prisoners. The world can no more take away this light, than it can give it. *Unto the just ariseth light in darkness*, says the Psalmist: and *When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me*, says the Church, Mic. vii. 8. And as this light is a comfort, so it is likewise a defence, which suffers no more of distress to come near the godly, than is profitable for them. Therefore we find very frequently in Scripture, where light and glory is mentioned, protection and safety jointly spoken of: *The Lord is my light, and withal my salvation: whom shall I fear?* says David, Psal. xxvii. 1. *The Lord is a sun, and He is a shield too.* Pal. lxxxiv. 21. And truly I think him shot of that hath the sun for his buckler. And for glory, *Upon all our glory shall be a defence*, says our Prophet, ch. iv. ver. 5. And the prophet Zechariah, where he calls the Lord the Church's *glory in the midst of her*, calls him likewise, *a wall of fire round about her*, ch. ii. ver. 4.



The only way, then, to be safe, is to keep this light and the glory entire. To part with any part of this glory, is to make a breach in that wall of fire ; and if that be a means of safety, let all men judge.

#### Hope amidst Billows.

How incongruous is it, that outward dangers or trials should over-match it ! Will you trust God upon His word, for salvation and eternal happiness, and be diffident for the safety and needful blessings of this temporal life, which life, in comparison, is but for a moment, and the best things of it but dross ? Consider that you dishonor faith exceedingly, and degenerate from the believing saints of former ages. Indeed, the promises of this life and that which concerns it, though godliness bath them, yet, they are not so absolute, nor are they so absolutely needful for you. But considering the wisdom and love of your Heavenly Father, learn to compose your minds by it.

*I will not be afraid, though ten thousands of the people set themselves against me round about,* says David. Psal. iii. 6. And lest you think him singular, in the 46th Psalm, it is the joint voice of the whole Church of God : *We will not fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea : though the waters thereof roar and be troubled ; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God : the holy place of the tabernacle of the most high God is in the midst of her ; she shall not be moved.* That is the way to be immoveable in the midst of troubles, as a rock amidst the waves. When God is in the midst of a kingdom or city, He makes it firm as Mount Sion, that cannot be removed. When He is in the midst of the soul, though calamities throng about it on all hands, and roar like the billows of the sea, yet, there is a constant calm within, such a peace as the world can neither give nor take away. On the other side, what is it but want of lodging God in the soul, and that in His stead the world is in the midst of men's hearts, that makes them shake like the leaves of trees at every blast of danger ? What a shame is it, seeing natural men, by the strength of nature, and by help of moral precepts, have attained such undaunted resolution and courage against outward changes, that yet they who would pass for Christians, are so soft and fainting, and so sensible of the smallest alterations ! The advantage that we have in this regard is infinite. What is the best ground-work of a philosopher's constancy, but as moving sands in comparison of the Rock that we may build upon ? But the truth is, that either we make no provision of faith for times of trial, or, if any we have, we neither know the worth nor the use of it, but lay it by, as a dead unprofitable thing, when

we should most use and exercise it. Notwithstanding all our frequenting of God's house, and our plausible profession, is it not too true, that the most of us either do not at all furnish ourselves with those spiritual arms that are so needful in the militant life of a Christian, or we learn not how to handle them, and are not in readiness for service? As was the case of that improvident soldier, whom his commander found mending some piece of his armour, when they were to give battle. It were not amiss, before afflictions overtake us, to try and train the mind somewhat by supposing the very worst and hardest of them; to say, What if the waves and billows of adversity were swelled and flowing in upon me: could I then believe? God hath said, *I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee*, with a heap of negations: *In no wise, I will not*. He hath said, *When thou passest through the fire and through the water, I will be with thee*. These I know and can discourse of them; but could I repose and rest upon them in the day of trial? Put your souls to it. Is there anything or person that you esteem and love exceedingly? Say, *What if I should lose this?* Is there some evil that is naturally more contrary and terrible to you than many others? Spare not to present that to the imagination too, and labor to make faith master of it beforehand in case it should befall you; and if the first thought of it scare you, look upon it the oftener, till the visage of it become familiar to you, that you start and scare no more at it. Nor is there any danger in these thoughts. Troubles cannot be brought the nearer by our thus thinking on them; but you may be both safer and stronger by breathing and exercising of your faith in supposed cases. But if you be so tender spirited, that you cannot look upon calamities so much as in thought or fancy, how would you be able for a real encounter? No, surely. But the soul that hath made God his stay can do both. See it in that notable resolution of the Prophet, Hab. iii. 17: *Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength*. And in that of David, Psal. xxiii. 4: *Yea, says he, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me*. You see how faith is a cork to his soul, keeping it from sinking in the deeps of afflictions.

#### The Loving-kindness of God.

A man may enjoy great deliverances, and many positive benefits from the hand of God, and yet have no share in *His loving-kindness*. How frequently doth God heap riches, and honor, and

health, on those He hates, and the common gifts of the mind too, wisdom and learning, yea, the common gifts of His own Spirit, and give a fair and long day of external prosperity to those on whom He never vouchsafed the least glance of His favorable countenance! Yea, on the contrary, He gives all those specious gifts to them with a secret curse! As He gave a king in wrath to His people, so He often gives kingdoms in His wrath to kings. Therefore David looks higher than the very kingdom which God promised him and gave him, when he speaks of *His loving-kindness*. In a word, he resolves to solace himself with the assurance of this, though he was stripped of all other comforts, and to quiet his soul herein, till deliverance should come; and when it should come, and whatsoever mercies with it, to receive them as fruits and effects of this *loving-kindness*: not prizing them so much for themselves, as for the impressions of that love which is upon them. And it is that image and superscription that both engages and moves him most to pay his tribute of praise. And truly, this is everywhere David's temper: his frequent distresses and wants never excite him so much to desire any particular comfort in the creature, as to entreat the presence and favor of God Himself. His saddest times are when, to his sense, this favor is eclipsed. *In my prosperity I said, I shall not be moved.* And what was his adversity that made him of another mind? *Thou didst hide Thy face and I was troubled.* This verifies his position in that same Psalm, *In thy favor is life.* Thus, in the 63rd Psalm, at the beginning, *My soul thirsteth for Thee, in a dry land where there is no water*: not for water, where there is none, but, *for Thee where there is no water.* Therefore he adds in verse 3, *Thy loving-kindness is better than life.* And all that be truly wise, are of this mind, and will subscribe to his choice. Let them enjoy this loving-kindness and prize it, because, whatever befalls them, their happiness and joy is above the reach of all calamities. Let them be derided and reproached abroad, yet still, this inward persuasion makes them glad and contented. As a rich man said, though the people hated and taunted him, yet, when he came home and looked upon his chests, *Egom et mihi plaudo domi*; with how much better reason do believers bear out external injuries! What inward contentment is theirs, when they consider themselves as truly enriched with the favor of God! And as this makes them condemn the contempts that the world puts upon them, so, likewise, it breeds in them a neglect and disdain of those poor trifles that the world admires. The sum of their desires is, (as that of the Cynic's was, the sunshine,) that the rays of the love of God may shine constantly upon them. The favorable aspect and large proffers of kings and princes, would be unwelcome to them, if they should stand betwixt them and the sight of that Sun. And truly they have reason. What are the highest things the world



affords? What are great honors and great estates, but great cares and griefs well dressed and colored over with a shew of pleasure, that promise contentment, and perform nothing but vexation? That they are not satisfying, is evident; for the obtaining of much of them doth but stretch the appetite, and teach men to desire more. They are not solid, neither. Will not the pains of a gout, of a stranguary, or some such malady, (to say nothing of the worst, the pains of a guilty conscience,) blast all these delights? What relish finds a man in large revenues and stately buildings, in high preferments and honorable titles, when either his body or his mind is in anguish! And besides the emptiness of all these things, you know they want one main point, *continuance*. But the loving-kindness of God hath all requisites to make the soul happy. *O satisfy us early with Thy goodness, (or mercy,) says Moses, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.* Psal. xc. 14. There is *fulness* in that for the vastest desires of the soul—*satisfy us*; there is *solid contentment*—that begets true *joy and gladness*; and there is *permanency—all our days*. It is the only comfort of this life, and the assurance of a better. This were a large subject to insist on, but certainly the naming of *His loving-kindness* should beget in each heart a high esteem of it, an ardent desire after it. And if it do so with you, then know, that it is only to be found in the way of holiness. He is a holy God, and can love nothing that is altogether unlike Himself. These must always be some similitude and conformity of nature to ground kindness and friendship upon, and to maintain it. That saying is true, *Idem velle et idem nolle, firma amicitia*. What gross self-flattery is it, to think that God's loving-kindness can be towards you, while you are in love with sin, which he so perfectly hates! How can the profane swearer, or voluptuous person, or the oppressor and covetous, or the close hypocrite, (worse than any of them,) rest upon the loving-kindness of the Lord in the day of troubles? No, surely. But the terror of His wrath shall be added to all their other calamities; and they shall find it heavier than all the rest. God will not pour this precious oil of gladness, this persuasion of His love, into filthy vessels. Even His own children, when they grieve and sadden His holy Spirit by unholiness, shall be sadly punished by the withdrawing of those comforting and sensible expressions of His love.

Labor, then, you who as yet never tasted of this love, to know what it means. Forsake and hate that which hitherto has made you strangers to it; for if you obtain this, it shall comfort you when those things cannot, but would rather prove your greatest torment. And you who have received any testimonies of it, entertain it carefully, for it is your best comfort both in your best days and in your worst days too.

You would all gladly be delivered from the many evils that



threaten you ; for many they be indeed, and peace is a great blessing. But suppose you were secured from all those fears, and He should command a sudden calm, (which truly he can do,) would you then think yourselves happy ? That life of yours which you so fear to lose by fire or sword, though you had peace, would ere long fall into the hands of some ague, or fever, or consumption, and perish by them ; or at the longest, a few years will end it : it is a lighted candle, which though nobody blow out, will quickly burn out of itself. But this loving-kindness is not so short-lived : it shall last as long as your souls, and so long as it lasts, they shall be happy. Those goods that you fear shall be pillaged and spoiled in war, how many hazards are they subject to even in peace ! Solomon tells you, that *riches oftentimes*, though nobody should take them away, *make themselves wings, and fly away*. And truly, many times the undue sparing of them, is but the letting of their wings grow, which makes them readier to fly away : and the contributing a part of them to do good, only clips their wings a little, and makes them stay the longer with their owner. But this by the way. Howsoever, *in the day of death, and in the day of wrath*, as Solomon says, *they profit nothing at all*. Prov. xi. 4. So then, though you may desire that God would command deliverance for you, yet, if you would be truly happy, your greater and more earnest suit should be, that He would *command His loving-kindness* to appear to your souls. And having once obtained this, you may possibly be persecuted, and endure hard trials, but one thing is made sure, you cannot be miserable. Nor shall you want temporal mercies and preservation too, so far as they are good for you. The inward assurance of this love shall carry you strangely and sweetly through all outward vicissitudes ; and when the day shall come, that all other comforts shall look pale upon you, then shall you find the worth and happiness of this more than ever before.

Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not Thy law.

Consider the nature of these tears. Tears spent for worldly crosses, are all lost ; they run all to waste ; they are *lachrymæ inanes*, empty, fruitless things. But tears shed for the breach of God's law, are the means to quench God's wrath. The prayers and tears of some few, may avert the punishment of many, yea, of a whole land. And if not so, yet are they not lost ; the mourners themselves have always benefit by them : as you have it in that known place, Ezek. ix. 4, they that mourned for the common abominations were *marked*, and the common desolation took not hold on them. This mourning for other men's wickedness, both testifies and preserves the godly man's innocence. I say, it preserves it, as well as testifies it : it keeps him from the contagion of that

bad air he lives in ; for without this, sin would soon grow familiar.

- It is good for men to keep up and maintain in their souls a dislike of sin ; for when once it ceaseth to be displeasing to a man, it will, before long, begin to be pleasing to him.

If we consider the nature of the godly, we shall see this mourning suit with it exceedingly, both in regard of his relation to God, and to man. God is his Father, and therefore it cannot but grieve him much, to see Him offended and dishonored. Love to God, and consequently to His law, and love to men, and desire of their good, are the spring of these *rivers*. A godly man is tender of God's glory and of His law ; every stroke that it receives, striketh his heart : and he hath bowels of compassion to men, and would be glad if they were converted and saved. He considers every man as his brother, and therefore is sorrowful to see him run the hazard of perishing in sin. The former sympathy, whereby the godly man tenders the glory of God, is from his piety, this latter, whereby he pities the misery of man, is from his charity. And from these flow the *rivers that run down his eyes*.

To be too sensible of worldly crosses, and prodigal of tears upon such slight occasions, is little better than childish or womanish ; but these tears that flow from love to God and grief for sin, have neither uncomeliness nor excess in them. Abundance of them will besem any man who is a Christian. Let profane men judge it a weakness to weep for sin, yet, we see David do it. Men of arms and valor need not fear disparagement by weeping thus : it is the truest magnanimity, to be sensible of the point of God's honor, which is injured by sin.

Again, the consideration of this truth will discover the world guilty of very much ingratitude to godly men. It hath always been the custom of profane persons, to seek to brand religion and godliness with disloyalty and turbulency, and to make it pass for an enemy to the peace and prosperity of states and kingdoms. You see clearly with what affection religion furnishes men towards the public, causing them to mourn for common sins, and so to prevent, as far as in them lies, common calamities. And this is of no little consequence ; for truly, it is not foreign power, so much as sin at home, that ruins kingdoms. All the winds that blow without the earth, be they never so violent, stir it not ; only that which is within its own bowels, makes an earthquake. It was a grave answer of Epaminondas, being asked what he was doing solitary and pensive in the time of solemn mirth, and feasting : *While my countrymen, said he, are so peaceably feasting, I am thinking on the best means to preserve that peace to them, that it may continue.* Which, a little altered, is applicable to the godly. They are oftentimes mourning for the sins, and praying for the peace, of the places where they live ; when, in the mean time, the greatest part are multiplying sin, and so forfeiting their peace.

*Rivers of waters.* "This is a mournful, melancholy life that these Precisians lead," says the worldling. Yes, truly, if there were no more in it than what he can perceive and judge of. But besides the full joy laid up for them, and the beginnings of it here, there is even in this mourning an unknown sweetness and delight. The philosopher says even of common tears, that there is some kind of pleasure in them, as some things please the taste by their very tartness. But of these tears, they that know them, know it to be eminently true, that they are pleasant. But be this exercise as sad as the profane call it, yet, why observe they not, that they themselves are much the cause of it? As they may read here: *Because they keep not God's law.*

They will be still praising Thee.

*Blessed are they that dwell in Thy House*, saith the Psalmist; and he adds this reason, *They will be still praising Thee*. There is indeed always in God's house, both fit opportunity and plentiful matter of His praises. But the greater number of those who frequent His house, do not *dwell* in it; their delight and affection is not there. Therefore they cannot praise Him: they come in as strangers, and have no skill in the songs of praise. Yea, and the very children of the family, who worship in spirit and in truth, find their instruments (their hearts) very often quite out of tune for praises, and sometimes most of all when praises are requisite. They find still such abundant cause of complaint in themselves, weighing down their spirits, that they can hardly at all wind them up to magnify that God whose mercy is far more abundant. If we would take a reflex view, and look back upon our carriage this day in the presence of our God, who is there among us, who would not find much work for sad thoughts? Would not one find that he had a hard stony heart, another, a light, inconstant, wandering heart to complain of, a third, an unbelieving heart, and some all of these? And they (if such there be) who have both deeply sorrowed and been largely comforted, will possibly, for all that upon former sad experience, be full of fears and jealousies, that this sweet temper will not be of long continuance; that before long, the world or some lust, will find, or make a way to creep in, and banish those heavenly thoughts, and trouble that peace and joy which accompanies them. Yet, notwithstanding all these causes of grief or fear, our causes of praise are both more and greater. And it is no reason that the sense of our own evil should prejudice that acknowledgment of God's goodness; yea, rather it should stir us up to extol it so much the more. Cease not to bemoan the evils of your own hearts; but withal forget not to magnify the riches of His grace, who hath given Himself for you, and to you. These two will not hinder one another, but the due intermixture of them will make a very good harmony. And



the fruit of them will be this, you shall have still more cause to praise, and less to complain. When the Lord shall find you humble acknowledgers of His grace, He will delight to bestow more grace upon you, and will subdue those iniquities for you, which you cannot. And though He is pleased to do it but gradually, by little and little, yet, in the end, the conquest shall be full; and then, He who is the *author and finisher of your faith*, though it is His own work, yet, because it is done in you, He shall account the victory yours, as obtained by you, and give you as conquerors, the crown of glory. *To him that overcometh*, saith he, *will I give to sit with me in my throne.* Rev. iii. 21.

There is nothing here, but from free grace. The courage and strength to fight in this spiritual warfare, the victory by fighting, and the crown by victory, flow all from that fountain. *In all these things, we are more than conquerors*, saith the Apostle—but how?—*through Him that loved us.* Therefore, if we desire to be such, let us humble ourselves before the throne of grace, entreating both for grace and glory in the name of Christ our Mediator.

#### The Name of Jesus fragrant.

When a natural eye looks upon the sacrament, to wit, of the Lord's Supper, it finds it a bare and mean kind of ceremony. Take heed there be not many of you that come to it, and partake of it with others, who prize it little, have but low conceits of it, and do indeed find as little in it as you look for. But Oh, what precious consolation and grace doth a believer meet with at this banquet! How richly is the table furnished to his eye! What plentiful varieties employ his hand and taste, what abundance of rare dainties! Yet, there is nothing but One here; but that One is all things to the believing soul. It finds *his* love is sweeter than the richest wine to the taste, or best odours to the smell; and that delightful word of his, *Thy sins are forgiven thee*, is the only music to a distressed conscience.

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Ask an afflicted conscience, if *Jesus*, that is, a *Saviour*, be not a precious work that hath a sovereign value, both a refreshing smell and a healing virtue. The hammer of the Law may break a stony heart in pieces, but it is only the blood of Jesus that can soften it. And where it is effectually poured, either upon a wounded soul, it heals it, or upon a hard heart, it mollifies it. For that other name, *Christ*, well may it be called, *an ointment poured out*, for it signifies his *anointing*. And that the sweet savor of this name may effect, read but that one passage, Isa. lxi. 1. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, &c.* What inestimable riches of consolation are there in each of those effects to which Christ was anointed! And yet, we find not a word



among them all for a proud, stiff-necked sinner. Here are *good tidings*, but it is to *the meek*; comfortable *binding up*, but it is for the *broken-hearted*; *liberty*, but it is for *captives* and *prisoners* groaning under their chains, and desirous to be delivered; not for such as delight in their bondage. There is *oil of joy*, and *garments of praise*, but they are provided for *mourning*, *dejected spirits* that need them; not for the impenitent. On the contrary, there is a terrible word interjected in the midst of these promises. *The day of vengeance of our God*; and that is the portion of Christ's enemies, and such are all incorrigible sinners.

Thus it is, at the same banquet from which you come, one may be filled with spiritual joy, and the very person that sits next, may be filled with a secret curse, and return more miserable than he came. But let the disconsolate, lamenting sinner lift up his head, and behold Christ, the Son of God, anointed a *prophet*, to preach salvation and liberty to such, a *priest*, to purchase it, and a *king*, to give it.

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And as aromatic spices, when they are pounded out and beaten, send forth their sweet smells most liberally, so, in these his sufferings, did the *obedience*, *patience*, and *love*, and all the *graces*, and the *name* of our Saviour, most clearly manifest themselves to the world. After he was dead, they embalmed his body, but they knew not that his own virtue would do more than all the ointments and spices in the world could do, not only by preserving his body from corruption, but by raising it the third day. And truly, after his resurrection, his own disciples knew his name better than ever before; and yet more fully after his ascension, when the Holy Ghost came down upon them; which was poured from Heaven on them for this very end; that they might pour forth Christ's name to the ends of the earth. Acts ii. 8. And they did so, carrying this precious *treasure in earthen vessels*, as that elect vessel St. Paul speaks, 1 Cor. iv. 7. And ever since, God hath continued the pouring forth of his name, by the ministry and preaching of the Gospel. It is true, there are too many of those that are employed in this work, who seek themselves, and their own ends, rather than His glory whom they preach. And they that are more upright, the very best of them are sinful men. But how mean and unworthy soever they be, despise not the Gospel. Let the sweet name which they pour forth, prevail for itself, that so you may reverence and love it, if you would have *salvation* by it; and *there is no other name under heaven*, by which *that* can be obtained.

As this name is poured forth in the *gospel preached*, so, in the *sacraments* annexed to it; and particularly in this, when the bread is broken, and the wine poured out. And was not this the earnest desire of the receivers of it this day,—it should have been,

—to have our share in it, for the refreshment and curing of our souls? Nor shall any that came thus, be disappointed. And if not immediately, yet, most certainly, and that in due time, they shall find the sweet fruits of it.

You have heard many ways how the name of Christ is poured out, yet there is one more, without which all the rest are ineffectual; it is this, the secret and powerful working of the Spirit of God in the soul. The ordinances and means of salvation do indeed pour forth the name of Christ round about a man, but till the Spirit concur with them, not one drop falls within the soul. And is he not so much the more miserable, who hears much of Christ, and partakes nothing of him? Yes, surely. A man may have much common knowledge of Christ, and may understand well, yea, may preach well, concerning his worth and graces, and yet, not *love* Him. But there is a particular knowledge of Him by the infusion of the Spirit, and where the smallest measure of this is, it presently wins the affection. There is a *shedding abroad of the love of God in our hearts*, that the Apostle speaks of, Rom. v. 5; and thus draws us after Him; for our love to God is nothing else but the reflection of His love to us. So then, though many hear of Christ, yet, because there are but few that have this special knowledge of him, therefore it is, that so few do truly esteem him and love him.

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If, then, you love Christ, the desires and breathings of your soul after him are strong and earnest. If he withdrew himself, or appear angry, if either you see him not, or see him look discontented, your grief will be so deep that it cannot be allayed by any worldly employments. Yet, upon some former tokens of his love, which is known to be unchangeable, hope will uphold the soul, till the beams of his grace scatter the cloud, and break through. Though our *Joseph* seem strange, and speak roughly for awhile, he cannot long refrain discovering his affection.

Again, love you him, unspeakable will be your joy when he smiles upon you. As great will be your delight in possession, as your desire is in pursuit; and while you have his presence, it will be too hard a task for any affliction to dismay you. Have you indeed heard Christ speak comfortably to you this day at his holy table? How will this enable the soul, and arm it against dangers, and distracting, distrustful fears! *Perfect love casteth out fear*, saith St. John: 1 John iv. 18: that is, all base and servile fear; but there is one fear that is in no heart but where love begets it, fear to offend. You know how wary and loth men are naturally to displease those they love; therefore it is, that love to Christ, and a careful observing of his commandments, are inseparable companions. Yea, love itself is the *fulfilling of the law*, for it gives up the heart to God, and consequently the whole man.

Then there is no return of duty which your receiving of Christ calls for, (and what doth it not call for ?) there is none, I say, but is comprised under this one of *love*. Do you owe him praises ? Yes, surely. Then *love him* ; that will stir you up to praise him. You never knew, but where much love was in the heart, it made the tongue ready and active upon all occasions to praise the party loved. Love will entertain small courtesies with great thanks ; much more where the benefit so far exceeds all possible thankfulness. Ought you to serve and obey him ? Doubtless : he hath for that purpose redeemed you with his precious blood. And truly there is no obedience or service so full and so cheerful, as that which flows from love. Should you study conformity to Christ, and labor to be like him ? Yes, for this is to walk worthy of Christ. Then there is nothing assimilates so much as love. Men delight in their society whom they love, and by their society they do insensibly contract their customs, and become like them.

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Never think that one and the same soul can have much pride and much of Christ. Ever, the more grace a man hath, the more sense hath he likewise of his own unworthiness, and God's free mercy, and consequently, the more humility.

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If you hate the defilements of the world, and be not polluted with inordinate affection to the creature, it shall never repent you to have made choice of Christ. He shall fill your hearts with peace and joy in believing. When you come to his house and table, he shall send you home with joy and sweet consolation, such as you would not exchange for crowns and sceptres. And after some few of these running banquets here below, you shall enter into the great marriage-supper of the Lamb, where faith shall end in sight, and hope in possession, and love continue in perpetual and full enjoyment ; where you shall be never weary, but forever happy in beholding the face of the Blessed Trinity : to whom be glory. Amen.

Without me ye can do nothing.

How true is that word of our Saviour, who is truth itself, *Without me, ye can do nothing* :—severed from me, as that branch that is not in me. They who are altogether out of Christ, in spiritual exercises do nothing at all. 'Tis true, they may pray and hear the word, yea, and preach it too, and yet in so doing they do nothing, nothing in effect. They have the matter of good actions, but it is the internal form gives being to things. They are but a number of empty words and a dead service to a living God. For all our outward performances and worship of the body are nothing but the body of worship, and therefore nothing but a carcass, ex-

cept the Lord Jesus, by his Spirit, breathe upon it the breath of life. Yea, the worshipper himself is spiritually dead till he receive life from Jesus, and be quickened by his Spirit. If this be true, then it will follow necessarily, that where numbers are met together, pretending to serve and worship God, yet He hath very few that do so indeed, the greatest part being out of Christ; and such being without him, they can do nothing in his service.

#### The carnal and spiritual Mind.

Man in regard of his composition, is, as it were, the tie and band of Heaven and earth: they meet and are married in him. A body he has taken out of the dust, but a soul is breathed into him from Heaven, from the *Father of Spirits*: a house of clay, but a guest of most noble extraction. But the pity is, it hath forgot its original, and is so drowned in flesh, that it deserves no other than to go under the name of flesh. It is become the slave and drudge of the body, and like the Israelites in Egypt, made perpetually to moil in clay. What is all your merchandise, your trades and manufactures, your tillage and husbandry, but all for the body, in its behalf, for food and raiment? In all these, the mind must be careful and thoughtful, and yet properly they reach it not, for itself hath no interest in them. It is true, the necessity of the body requires much of these things, and superfluous custom far more; but it is lamentable that men force their soul to forget itself and its proper business, to attend to these things only, and be busy in them. They spend all their time, and their choicest pains, upon perishing things, and which is worse, engage their affections to them. *They mind earthly things, whose end is destruction.* Phil. iii. 18.

Will you consider seriously, that your souls run the hazard of perishing, because you consider not their spiritual nature? When that earthly tabernacle of yours shall fall to the ground, (and ere long it must,) your souls must then enter eternity, and though you had as large a share of earthly things as your earthly hearts now would wish, they will all lose their use in that moment. They are not a proper good for the soul at any time, and least at that time. If you keep it, all your life long, busy about the interest and benefit of the flesh, the body, how poor will it be when they part, having provided nothing at all for itself, but the guiltiness of a sinful life, which will sink it into that bottomless pit! Be forewarned then: *For to be carnally minded is death.* Ver. 6, preceding the text.

*The carnal mind.* Now, as sin hath debased and degenerated the soul of man, making it carnal, so, the Son of God, by taking on our nature, hath sublimated it again, and made it spiritual. The souls that receive him are spiritualized; yea, as sin made



the soul carnal, grace makes the very body to become spiritual, making it partaker and co-worker in spiritual things together with the soul, in doing and suffering, and participant of the hopes, too, of an everlasting reward. This is the main Christian character our Apostle gives here, that they are *spiritually minded*, and that their actions suit their minds : *They walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*. Whereas before, with the rest of the world, they were eager in the pursuit of honors, and profits, and worldly pleasures, and new stream of their desires runs in another channel. They seek after honor, and are very ambitious of it ; but it is such honor the Apostle speaks of in this Epistle, ch. ii. ver. 7. *By patient continuance in well doing they seek for glory, and honor, and immortality*. Their mind is upon profit and gain ; but it is with the same Apostle, Phil. iii. 18, that they *may win Christ*, and they account all other things *loss* in comparison. And their desires are after pleasure too, but not *carnal pleasures* ; these are both base, and of short continuance, but the pleasures they aim at, are those that are *at God's right hand, and for evermore*, Psal. xvi. 11 ; and that *path of life* which the Psalmist there speaks of, that way of holiness which leads thither, is their delight. Spiritual exercises they go to, not as their task only, but more as their joy and refreshment. And this change the Spirit of God works in the soul, making it, yea, and the body wherein it dwells, of carnal, to become spiritual : as fire, to which the Holy Ghost is compared, refines sand and ashes, and makes of them the purest glass, which is so neat and transparent.

#### The Heart to be first regulated.

To regulate the outward carriage, without the living principle of an enlightened and sanctified conscience within, is to build without a foundation. This is the thing God eyes most. He looks through the surface of men's action to the bottom, follows them into their source, examines from what motives and reasons they flow. He sees not only the handle of the dial, but all the wheels and weights of the clock that are the cause of its motion, and accordingly judges both men and their actions to be good or evil, as the inward frame and secret motions of the heart are. In His own worship, the outside of it may have the same visage and plausible appearance in a multitude convened to it and concurring in it, and no human eye can trace a difference ; and yet, Oh, what vast difference doth God's eye discover amongst them ! He sees the multitude of those who are driven to His house by the power of civil and church laws, or carried to it only with the stream of company and custom ; (and these, I fancy, take up the most room in our churches ; ) but He sees here and there, where such are in any corner, who worship Him in singleness of heart, out of con-

science to His holy command, and under a sense of their many obligations, those who dare not let pass any opportunity they can reach, of doing service to their Lord, and who dare not slight His word, and thus coming *for conscience' sake*, they do present their souls to receive His word, give their hearts up to receive the impression of it, put themselves under it, to be stamped by it according to that, Rom. vi. 17: *But ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.* So, likewise, He sees those who bear His name to His people, the ministers of His word. If they preach constantly, and live blamelessly, and are diligent and irreprovable in all the external parts of their walking, this last satisfies men's questions in their inspection and visitings; but God's inquiry and visiting searches deeper. He asks from what heart all this comes, whether from a holy conscience of the weight and high importance of their holy calling, and a faithful respect to the interest of their Master's glory and His people's souls.

Owe no Man anything, but to love one another.

So far as thou canst acquit thyself, owe nothing else to any; but love, *owe that to all*. Not a like familiar converse necessarily to all, nor a like measure of beneficence, nor a like degree of love, but yet love alike sincere and real to all. Not either a false, or an empty, fair carriage, but holy Christian love, love rooted in thy heart, and springing up in thy actions, even towards all men, as thy opportunity and ability serves thee, and their condition requires of thee; not hating nor despising any for their poverty in estate, or deformity of body, or defects of mind, nor for that which works most on men, injuries done to thyself. All they can do, cannot give thee an *acquittance*, or free thee of this *debt* of love; for thou art bound to Another. This is the rule of Jesus Christ, and the badge of Christians, to love their very enemies. But this, Oh, how rare is it! How few attain it! Yea, how few endeavor to attain it! On the contrary, it is by many given over as a desperate, impossible business, they judging of it not according to that Spirit of Christ that is his, but according to the corrupt rancour and bitterness of their own natural perverse spirits. Yea, and too many disdain it as a *poorness* and *sheepishness* of spirit to suffer and forgive. Be it so: yet is it such a *sheepishness* as makes a man like *Jesus Christ*, who, as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth, when his heart within was compassionate towards them, as appeared when he opened it concerning them, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* This is true greatness of spirit, to partake of *His* spirit that is the highest and best of spirits, and it is the spirit of *meekness* and *love*. How much is

this above the common spirit of the world ! Truly base and poor is that which is decomposed and put out of frame with every touch ; whereas this is mighty, and triumphs indeed over all provocations and injuries.

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Love can generously pass over those things about which folly and pride makes such a noise, *Oh ! can I bear this and that ?* And thou wouldst, by so saying, speak thy stout-heartedness. Fool, is this stoutness and strength ? Is it not rather the greatest weakness to be able to bear nothing ? Have not the weakest persons much of that kind of stoutness and strength, who are the soonest moved and disquieted, women and children, and sick or aged persons ? But love, Christian love to thy brother, makes the mind truly strong and composed, not easily stirred against him for every trifle, nay, not for greater matters. Love can *endure* much, yea, *all things*, says the Apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. 7 ; it hath strength to stand under them, and stand firm ; whereas base minds, void of love, break all to pieces under a very small weight. Love *bearcth all things*, as the supporters of a strong and firm building ; or rather, as a house it *covers all*, for so the word signifies. It doth not blaze abroad the failings of men ; yea, it *hides much*, *covers a multitude of sins*, not only from the eyes of others, but even from a man's own eyes ; makes him not behold and look on those things that might provoke him. Yea, it is ingenious and inventive of the fairest constructions of things, to take them by the best side, in the favorable sense ; and so long as there is any agreeable way to interpret anything favorably, will not have a hard thought of it, *thinks no ill*, as there it is. Not only hath it no active evil thoughts of revenge, or returning evil, but willingly it doth not *judge ill* of what is done by others, and what might be so looked on as to provoke : doth not *reckon* wrongs so high as want of charity moves the most to do, it *sets them low*. And as a healthful constitution is sweet itself, and relishes all things right, so there is more true pleasure and content of mind, in forgiving, than ever any man found in revenge. This is but a feverish delight which malice and anger have wrought, working perhaps greedily, but it is indeed a distemper. This love is the very root of peace and concord, a humble grace, that is not *lifted up* and *insolent*, as the word there is, and so doth not breed jars about punctilios : it esteems so well of others, and so meanly of itself, that it cannot well be crossed by any in that matter of undervaluing. But vain spirits are puffed up with a little approbation, and as easily kindled up with any affront or apprehended disgrace. Love is not lightly put out of temper, as, in sickly constitutions, a fit of fever or ague is brought on by any blast or wrong touch of diet : it is of a stronger digestion, and firmer health.



## Preface to a Sermon.

Great and various are the evils that lodge within the heart of man. Hence proceed *evil thoughts, adulteries, murders*, and many other mischiefs, as our Saviour specifies there, Matt. xv. 19: they come forth apace, and yet, the heart is not emptied of them. But was this heart thus at first, when it came newly forth of the hands of its Maker? Surely not. *Man was made upright, but he found out many inventions.* Eccl. vii. 29. Soon did the heart find the way to corrupt itself; but to renew itself, is as impossible as to have been the author of its own creation. Easily could it deface the precious characters of God's image, but it passes the art of men and angels to restore them. Only the Son of God, who for that purpose took on him our nature, can make us, according to the Apostle's phrase, *partakers of the Divine nature.* It is He alone that can banish those unclean spirits, and keep possession that they return no more. Have not they made a happy change of guests, who have those infernal troops turned out of doors, and the King of Glory fixing his abode within them? This is the voice of the Gospel: *Lift up your heads, ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may enter in.* Psal. xxiv. 7. But small is the number of those who open where this voice is daily sounded. Yea, some there are, who grow worse under the frequent preaching of the word, as if sin were emulous, and, as is said of virtue, would grow by opposition. The truth is, too many of us turn these serious exercises of religion into an idle divertisement. Take heed that formality, and custom, and novelty, do not often help to fill up many rooms in our church. It were indeed a breach of charity, to entertain the fullness of your assemblies with an ill construction: no, it is to be commended. But would to God we were more careful to show our religion in our lives, to study to know better the deceits and impostures of our own hearts, and to gain daily more victory over our secret and best beloved sins! Let our intentions, then, be to meet with Christ here, and to admit him gladly to dwell and rule within us. If he conquer our inward enemies, those without shall not be able to hurt us. If he deliver us from our sinful lusts, he will stir our own distrustful fears. And that such may be the fruits of our meeting, let us turn ourselves towards the throne of grace, with humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, the righteous.

## God's dispensation above our Wisdom.

Were the matter referred to our modelling, we should assign the Church constant peace and prosperity for her portion, and not



consent that the least air of trouble should come near her; we would have no enemies to molest her, nor stir against her, or if they did stir, we would have them to be presently repressed; and these, in our judgment, would be the fairest and most glorious tokens of *His* love and power whose spouse she is. But this carnal wisdom is *enmity against God*, and is opposed to the glory of God, which rises so often out of the wrath of His enemies. Had God caused Pharaoh to yield at the very first, to the release of his people, where had been the fame of those miraculous judgments in Egypt, and those mercies on the Israelites, the one setting out and illustrating the other? Where had been that name and honor which God says he would gain to Himself, and which he did gain out of Pharaoh's final destruction, making that stony-hearted king and his troops *sink like a stone in the waters*, as Moses sings? Observe his proud boastings immediately foregoing his ruin: *I will pursue*, says he, *I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied on them: I will draw my sword, and my hand shall destroy them*. Soon after, the sea quenches all this heat. Commonly, big threatenings are unhappy presages of very ill success. That historian [Herodotus] says well of God, *Deus neminem alium, quam seipsum, sinit de se magnifice sentire:—God suffers no other to think highly of himself, than Himself alone*. And indeed, as He abhors these boastings, so He delights in the abasing of the lofty heart whence they flow, and it is His prerogative to gain praise to Himself out of their wrath. *Hast thou an arm like God?* says the Lord to Job, then, *look upon the proud and bring them low*. Job. xi. 9. 12. When Sennacherib came up against Jerusalem, his blasphemies and boastings were no less vast and monstrous than the number of his men and chariots. Good Hezekiah turned over the matter unto God, spreading the letter of blasphemies before Him, upon which God undertook the war, and assured Hezekiah that the Assyrian should not so much as shoot an arrow against the city, but return the same way he came. 2 Kings xix. 33. And the deliverance there promised and effected, is conceived to have been the occasion of penning this very Psalm. Surely, when an angel did in one night slay 185,000 in their camps, that wrath and those threats tended exceedingly to the praise of the God of Israel. The hook that he put in Sennacherib's nostrils, (as the history speaks,) to pull him back again, was more remarkable than the fetters would have been, if he had tied him at home, or hindered his march with his army.

Who is he then that will be impatient because of God's patience, and judge Him slack in judgment, while the rage of the wicked prevails awhile? Know, that He is more careful of His own glory than we can be, and the greater height man's wrath arises to, the more honor shall arise to Him out of it. Did not His

omnipotency shine brighter in the flames of that furnace into which the three children were cast, than if the king's wrath had been at first cooled? Certainly, the more both it and the furnace had their heat augmented, the more was God glorified. *Who is that God*, saith he blasphemously and proudly, *that can deliver you out of my hands?* Dan. iii. 15. A question, indeed, highly dishonoring the Almighty, but stay till the real answer come; and then, not only shall that wrath praise Him, but that very same tongue, though inured to blasphemy, shall be taught to bear a main part in the confession of those praises. Let that apostate emperor [Julian] go taunting the Head and tormenting the members, of that mystical body, his closing with, *Thou hast overcome, O Galilean*, (meaning Christ,) shall help to verify that, whether its course be shorter or longer, man's wrath ends always in God's praise. In like manner, the closing of the lion's mouth, spake louder to His praise who stopped them, than if He had stopped Daniel's enemies in the beginning of their wicked design. So hot was their rage, that the king's favorable inclination to Daniel, (of which, in other cases, courtiers used to be so devout observers,) yea, his contesting and pleading for him, did profit him nothing, but they hurried their king to the execution of their unjust malice, though themselves were convinced that nothing could be found against him, but only concerning *the law of his God*. Dan. vi. 5. It is said, ver. 14, that king Darius *set his heart on Daniel to deliver him, and he labored to do it till the going down of the sun*, and then those counsellors and counsels of darkness overcame him. But upon this black night of their prevailing wrath, followed immediately a bright morning of praises to Daniel's God, when the lions that were so quiet company all night to Daniel, made so quick a breakfast of those accursed courtiers who had maliciously accused him. *Even so let thine enemies perish, O Lord, and let those that love Thee, be as the sun when he goes forth in his might!*

His Heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

That ye many know how serene and sweet a thing it is, it is here likewise joined with confidence, *trusting in the Lord*; a quickening confidence always accompanying it, and so, undoubtedly, it is a blessed thing. *Blessed is he that feareth.* Fear sounds rather quite contrary, hath an air of misery; but add, *whom?* *That feareth the Lord.* That touch turns it into gold. He that so fears, fears not: *He shall not be afraid.* All petty fears are swallowed up in this great fear, as a spirit inured with great things, is not stirred nor affected at all with small matters. And this great fear is as sweet and pleasing as those little fears are anxious and vexing. Secure of other things, he can say, If my

God be pleased, no matter who is displeased. No matter who despises me, if He account me His. Though all forsake me, my dearest friends grow estranged, and look another way, if He reject me not, that is my only fear, and for that I am not perplexed : I know He will not. As they answered Alexander, when he sent to inquire what they most feared, thinking possibly they would have said, lest he should invade them, but their answer was, *We fear nothing but lest Heaven should fall upon us* ; which they did not fear neither : so, a believer hath no fear but of the displeasure of Heaven, lest the anger of God should fall upon him ; he fears *that* : that is, accounts *that* only terrible ; but yet, he doth not fear, doth not apprehend it will fall upon him, he is better persuaded of the goodness of his God. So this *fear* is still joined with *trust*, as here, so often elsewhere. Psal. xxxiii. 18, xl. 3, and cxlvii. 11.

There is no turbulency in this fear ; it is calm and sweet. Even that most terrible evil, that which this fear properly apprehends and flies, *sin*, yet, the fear of that goes not to a distraction. Though there is little strength, and many and great enemies, mighty *An-akins* of temptations from without, and corruptions within, and so, good reason for a holy, humble fear and self-distrust, yea, this should not beat us off : yet, it is most fit to put us on to trust in Him who is our strength. Courage ! the day shall be ours. Though we may be often foiled and down, and sometimes almost at a hopeless point, yet, our *Head* is on high. He hath conquered for us, and shall conquer in us. Therefore, so fear as not to fear.

#### The Believer a Hero.

Alas ! most persons have dull or dim apprehensions and shallow impressions of God : therefore they have little either of this *fear* or of this *trust*. God is not in all their thoughts, but how to compass this or that design, and if they miss one, then how to compass another : they are cast from one wave upon another. And if at any time they attain their purpose, they find it but a wind, a handful of nothing, far from what they fancied it.

Oh, my brethren, my desire is, that the faces of your souls were but once turned about, that they were towards Him, looking to Him, continually fearing Him, delighting, trusting in Him, making Him your all. Can any thing so elevate and ennoble the spirit of a man, as to contemplate and converse with the pure, ever-blessed Spring and Father of Spirits ? Beg that you may know Him, that He would reveal Himself to you ; for otherwise, no teaching can make Him known. It is to light candles to seek the sun, to think to attain to this knowledge without His own revealing it. If He hide His face, who then may behold Him ?

Pray for this quickening knowledge, such a knowledge as will effectually work this happy *fear* and *trust*.

You who have attained any thing of it, desire and *follow on to know the Lord* ; particularly, so that your hearts may repose on Him. So fear that you may not fear. He would have our spirits calm and quiet ; for when they are in a hurry and confusion, they are then fit for nothing : all within makes a jarring, unpleasant noise, as of an instrument quite out of tune.

This fear of God is not, you see, a perplexing doubting and distrust of His love : on the contrary, it is a fixed resting and trust on His love.

Many who have some truth of grace, are, through weakness, filled with disquieting fears ; but possibly, though they perceive it not, it may be in some, a point of wilfulness, a little latent, undiscerned affection of scrupling and doubting, placing much of religion in it. True, where the soul is really solicitous about its interest in God, that argues some grace ; but being vexingly anxious about it, argues that grace is low and weak. A spark there is, even discovered by that smoke ; but the great smoke still continuing, and nothing seen but it, argues there is little fire, little faith, little love.

And this, as it is unpleasant to thyself, so is it to God, as smoke to the eyes. What if one should be always questioning with his friend, whether he loved him or not, and upon every little occasion were ready to think he doth not, how would this disrelish their society together, though truly loving each other ! The far more excellent way, and more pleasing both to ourselves and to God, were to resolve on humble trust, reverence, and confidence, being most afraid to offend, delighting to walk in His ways, loving Him and His will in all, and then, resting persuaded of His love, though he chastise us. And even though we offend Him, and see our offences in our chastisements, yet, He is good, *plentiful in redemption*, ready to forgive ; therefore, *let Israel trust and hope*. Psal. cxxx. 7. Let my soul roll itself on Him, and adventure there all its weight. He bears greater matters, upholding the frame of heaven and earth, and is not troubled nor burdened with it.

The heart of a man is not sufficient for self-support ; therefore, naturally, it seeks out some other thing to lean and rest itself on. The unhappiness is, for the most part, that it seeks to things below itself : but these, being both so mean and so uncertain, cannot be a firm and certain stay to it. These things are not fixed themselves : how can they then fix the heart ? Can a man have firm footing on a quagmire, or moving sands ? Therefore, men are forced in these things, still to shift their seat, and seek about from one to another, still rolling and unsettled. The believer only hath this advantage ; he hath a rest high enough and sure enough,



out of the reach of all hazards. *His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.*

The basis of this happiness is, *He trusteth in the Lord.* So the heart is *fixed*; and so fixed, it *fears no ill tidings.*

This *trust* is grounded on the word of God, revealing the power and all-sufficiency of God, and withal His goodness, His offer of Himself to be the stay of souls, His commanding us to rest on Him. People wait on I know not what persuasions and assurances, but I know no other to build faith on, than the word of promise, the truth and faithfulness of God opened up, His wisdom, and power, and goodness, as the stay of all those who, renouncing all other props, will venture on it, and lay all upon Him. *He that believes, sets to his seal that God is true,* John iii. 33, and so, he is sealed for God; his portion and interest are secured. *If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.* Isa. vii. 9.

This is the way to have peace and assurance, which many look for first, *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.* Isa. xxvi. 3. So here, the heart is fixed by *trusting.*

Seek, then, clearer apprehensions of the faithfulness and goodness of God, hearts more enlarged in the notion of free grace, and the absolute trust due to it; thus shall they be more established and fixed in all the rollings and changes of the world.

*His heart is fixed,* or *prepared,* ready-dressed and in arms for all services, resolved not to give back, able to meet all adventures, and stand its ground. God is unchangeable, and therefore faith is invincible. That sets the heart on Him, fastens it there on the rock of eternity; then, let winds blow, and storms arise, it cares not.

This firm and close cleaving unto God hath in it of the affection which is inseparable from this trust, *love*, joined with *faith*, and so, a hatred of all ways and thoughts that alienate and estrange from God, that remove and unsettle the heart. The holiest, weariest heart is surely the most believing and fixed heart. If a believer will adventure on any way of sin, he shall find that it will unfix him, and shake his confidence, more than ten thousand hazards and assaults from without. These are so far from moving, that they settle and fix the heart commonly more, causing it to cleave the closer and nearer unto God; but sinful liberty breeds disquiet, and disturbs all. Where sin is, there will be a storm: the wind within the bowels of the earth, makes the earthquake.

Would you be quiet, and have peace within in troublous times? keep near unto God, beware of any thing that may interpose betwixt you and your confidence. *It is good for me,* says the Psalmist, *to be near God*: not only to draw near, but to keep near, to cleave to him, and dwell in Him: so the word imports. Oh, the sweet calm of such a soul amidst all storms! Thus, once, trusting

and fixed, then no more fear: he is *not afraid of evil tidings*, not of any *ill-hearing*. Whatsoever sound is terrible in the ears of men, the noise of war, news of death, or even the sound of the trumpet in the last judgment, he hears all this undisquieted. Nothing is unexpected. Being once fixed on God, then the heart may put cases to itself, and suppose all things imaginable, the most terrible, and look for them; not trouble before trouble comes, with dark and dismal apprehensions, but satisfied in a quiet, unmoved expectation of the hardest things. Whatsoever it is, though particularly not thought on before, yet the heart is not afraid of the news of it, because it is *fixed, trusting on the Lord*. Nothing can shake that foundation, nor dissolve than union; therefore, no fear. Yea, this assurance stays the heart in all things, how strange and unforeseen soever to it. All are foreseen to my God on whom I trust, yea are forecontrived and ordered by Him. This is the impregnable fortress of a soul. All is at the disposal and command of my God: my Father rules all: what need I fear?

Every one trusts to somewhat. As for honor, and esteem, and popularity, they are airy, vain things: but riches seem a more solid work and fence, yet they are but a tower in conceit, not really. Prov. xviii. 11. *The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as a high wall is his own conceit*. But, (ver. 10,) *the name of the Lord is a strong tower*, indeed. This is the thing that all seek, some *fence* and *fixing*; here it is. We call you not to vexation and turmoil, but *from* it, and, as St. Paul said, *Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you*. Ye blindly and fruitlessly seek after the *show*. The true aiming at this fixedness of mind will secure that, though they fall short, yet, by the way they will light on very pretty things that have some virtue in them, as they that seek the philosopher's stone. But the believer hath the *thing*, the secret itself of tranquillity and joy, and this turns all into gold, their iron chains into a crown of gold: *While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen*. 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

This is the blessed and safe estate of believers. Who can think they have a sad, heavy life? Oh! it is the only lightsome, sweet, cheerful condition in the world. The rest of men are poor, rolling, unstayed things, every report shaking them, as the leaves of trees are shaken with the wind; yea, lighter than so, as the chaff that the wind drives to and fro at its pleasure. Isa. vii. 2; Psal. i. 4. Would men but reflect and look in upon their own hearts, it is a wonder what vain, childish things the most would find there, glad and sorry at things as light as the toys of children, at which they laugh and cry in a breath. How easily is the heart puffed up with a thing or a word that pleaseth us, bladder-like, swelled with a little air, and it shrinks again in discouragements and fear,

upon the touch of a needle's point, which gives that air some vent.

What is the life of the greatest part but a continual tossing betwixt vain hopes and fears? All their days are spent in these. Oh! how vain a thing is a man even in his best estate, while he is nothing but himself,—while his heart is not united and fixed on God, and he is disquieted in vain. How small a thing will do it! He needs no other than his own heart; it may prove disquietment enough to itself: his thoughts are his tormentors.

I know, some men are, by a stronger understanding and by moral principles, somewhat raised above the vulgar, and speak big of a constancy of mind; but these are but flourishes, an acted bravery. Somewhat there may be that will hold out in some trials, but it will fall far short of this fixedness of faith. Troubles may so multiply, as to drive them at length from their posture, and may come on so thick, with such violent blows, as will smite them out of their artificial guard, disorder all their Seneca and Epictetus, and all their own calm thoughts and high resolves. The approach of death, though they make a good mien, and set the best face on it, or if not, yet, some kind of terror, may seize on their spirits, which they are not able to shift off. But the soul trusting on God, is prepared for all, not only for the calamities of war, pestilence, famine, poverty, or death, but, when in the saddest apprehensions of the soul, beyond hope, believes against hope; even in the darkest night, casts anchor in God, reposes on Him when he sees no light. *Is. l. 10. Yea, though he slay me, says Job, yet will I trust on Him,*—not merely, though I die, but, though *He* slay me: when I see His hand lifted up to destroy me, yet, from that same hand will I look for salvation.

My brethren, my desire is, to stir up in your hearts an ambition after this blessed estate of the godly who fear the Lord, and trust in Him, and so fear no other thing. The common revolutions and changes of the world, and those which in these late times we ourselves have seen, and the likelihood of more and greater coming on, seem dreadful to weak minds. But let these persuade us the more to prize and seek this fixed, unaffrighted station: there is no fixing but here.

Oh! that you would be persuaded to break off from the vile ways of sin, which debase the soul and fill it full of terrors, and to disengage them from the vanities of this world, to take up in God, to live in Him wholly, to cleave to and depend on Him, to esteem nothing beside Him! Excellent was the answer of that holy man to the Emperor, on his first essaying him with large proffers of honor and riches to draw him from Christ: *Offer these things (says he) to children, I regard them not.* Then after he had tried to terrify him with threatening: *Threaten (says he) your effeminate courtiers, I fear none of these things.*



Seek to have your hearts established on Him by the faith of eternal life, and then it will be ashamed to distrust Him in any other thing. Yea, truly, you will not much regard, nor be careful for other things how they be. It will be all one, the better and the worse of this *moment*; the things of it, even the greatest, being both in themselves so little and worthless, and of so short continuance.

Well, choose you; but all reckoned and examined, I had rather be the poorest believer than the greatest king on earth. How small a commotion, small in its beginning, may prove the overturning of the greatest kingdom! But the believer is heir to a kingdom that cannot be shaken. The mightiest and most victorious prince, who hath not only lost nothing, but hath been gaining new conquests all his days, is stopped by a small distemper in the middle of his course; he returns to his dust, and then his vast designs fall to nothing. *In that very day his thoughts perish.* But the believer, in that very day, is sent to the possession of his crown; that is his coronation day; all his thoughts are accomplished.

How can you affright him? Bring him word, that his estate is ruined. *Yet, my inheritance is safe,* says he. "Your wife, or child, or dear friend, is dead." *Yet, my Father lives.* "You yourself must die." Well then, *I go home to my Father, and to my inheritance.*

#### The Seed is the Word.

The word, the *seed*, hath in it a productive virtue to bring forth fruit according to its kind, that is, the fruit of a *new life*; not only a new habitude and fashion of life without, but a new nature, a new kind of life within, new thoughts, a new estimate of things, new delights and actions. When the word reveals God, His greatness and holiness, then it begets pious fear and reverence, and study of conformity to Him. When it reveals His goodness and mercy, it works love and confidence. When it holds up to our view Christ crucified, it crucifies the soul to the world, and the world to it. When it represents those rich things which are laid up for us, that blessed inheritance of the saints, then it makes all the lustre of this world vanish, shows how poor it is, weans and calls off the heart from them, raising it to those higher hopes, and sets it on the project of a crown. And so it is a seed of noble thoughts and of a suitable behavior in a Christian, as in the exposition of this parable, it is called the *word of the kingdom*; *seed*, an *immortal seed*, as St. Peter calls it, 1 Pet. i. 23, springing up to no less than eternal life.

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So, then, this is not all, to have the word and to hear it, as if



that would serve our<sup>•</sup> turn and save us, as we commonly fancy, *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we.* Multitudes under the continual sound of the word, yet remain lifeless and fruitless, and die in their sins. Therefore, we must inquire and examine strictly, what becomes of it, how it works, what it brings forth; and for this very end, this parable declares so many are fruitless. We need not press them, they are three to one here; yea, that were too narrow, the odds is far greater, for these are but the kinds of unfruitful grounds, and under each of these are comprised huge multitudes of individuals, so that there may be a hundred to one, and it is to be feared, that in many congregations, it is more than so.

Whence is then the difference? Not from the seed; that is the same to all. Not from the sower neither, for though these be diverse, and of different abilities, yet it hangs little or nothing on that. Indeed, he is the fittest to preach, who is himself most like his message, and comes forth not only with a handful of this seed in his hand, but with store of it in his heart, the word *dwelling richly in him*; yet, howsoever, the seed he sows, being this word of life, depends not on his qualifications in any kind, either of common gifts, or special grace. People mistake this much, and it is a carnal conceit to hang on the advantages of the minister, or to eye that much. The sure way is, to look up to God, and to look into thine own heart. An unchanged, unsoftened heart, like an evil soil, disappoints the fruit. What though sown by a weak hand, yea, possibly a foul one, yet if received into a clean and honest heart, it will fructify much. There is in the world a needless and prejudicial distinguishing of men, out of which people will not come, for all we can say.

#### Stony ground Hearers.

The second is *stony ground*; hard hearts, not softened and made penetrable to receive in deeply this ingrafted word with meekness, with humble yielding and submission to it; the *rocks*. Yet, in these, there is often some receiving of it, and a little slender moisture above them, which the warm air may make spring up a little: they *receive with joy*, have a little present delight in it, are moved and taken with the sermon, possibly even to the shedding of some tears; but the misery is, there is a want of depth of earth, it sinks not.

No wonder if there is some present delight in these. Therefore, the *word of the kingdom*, especially if skilfully and sensibly delivered by some more able speaker, pleases. Let it be but a fancy, yet it is a fine pleasant one; such love as induced the Son of God to die for sinners: such a rich purchase made as a kingdom; such glory and sweetness. Therefore the description of

the new Jerusalem, Rev. xxi., suppose it to be but a dream, or one of the visions of the night, yet it is passing fine; it must needs please a mind that heeds what is said of it. There is a *natural* delight in spiritual things, and thus the word of the Prophet, as the Lord tells him, (Ezek. xxxiii. 32,) was as a minstrel's voice, a fine song so long as it lasted, but which dies out in the air. It may be, the relish and air of it will remain awhile in the imagination, but not long; even that wears out and is forgotten. So here, it is *heard with joy*, and some is *springing up* presently: they commend it, and, it may be, repeat some passages, yea, possibly desire to be like it, to have such and such graces as are recommended, and upon that think they have them, are presently good Christians in their own conceit. And to appearance, some change is wrought, and it appears to be all that it is; but it is not deep enough. They talk, possibly, too much, more than those whose hearts receive it more deeply: there it lies hid longer, and little is heard of it; others may think it is lost, and, possibly, themselves do not perceive that it is there; they are exercised and humbled at it, and find no good in their own hearts; yet, there it is hid; as David says, *Thy word have I hid in my heart*. And as seed in a manner dies in a silent, smothering way, yet, it is in order to the fructifying and the reviving of it, so it will spring up in time, and be *fruitful* in its season—*with patience*, as St. Luke hath it of the good ground; not so suddenly, but much more surely and solidly.

But the most are present mushroom Christians, soon ripe, soon rotten. The seed goes never deep: it springs up indeed, but anything blasts and withers it. There is little root in some. If trials arise, either the heat of *persecution* without, or a *temptation* within, this sudden spring-seed can stand before neither.

Oh, rocky hearts! How shallow, shallow, are the impressions of Divine things upon you! Religion goes never further, than the upper surface of your hearts. You have but few deep thoughts of God, and of Jesus Christ, and the things of the world to come; all are but slight and transient glances.

#### How we may be Fruitful.

This seed alone, being fruitful, makes rich and happy, springs up to *eternal life*! Oh! that we were wise, that we would at length learn to hear every sermon as on the utmost edge of time, at the very brink of eternity! For anything we know for ourselves, of any of us it may be really so. However, it is wise and safe to do as if it were so. Will you be persuaded of this? It were a happy Sermon, if it could prevail for the more fruitful hearing of all the rest henceforward. We have lost too much of our little

time ; and' thus, with the Apostle, *I beseech you, I beseech you, receive not the grace of God in vain.*

Now, that you may be fruitful, examine well your own hearts ; pluck up, weed out, for there are still thorns. Some will grow, but he is the happiest man who hath the sharpest eye and the busiest hand, spying them out, and plucking them up. *Take heed how you hear ; think it not so easy a matter. Plow up and sow not among thorns.* Jer. iv. 3.

And above all, pray, pray before, after, and in hearing. Dart up desires to God. He is the Lord of the harvest, whose influence doth all. The difference of the soil makes indeed the difference of success : but the Lord hath the privilege of bettering the soil. He who framed the heart, changes it when and how he will. There is a curse on all grounds naturally, which fell on the earth for man's sake, but fell more on the ground of man's own heart within him : *Thorns and briars shalt thou bring forth.* Now it is He that denounceth that curse, who alone hath power to remove it. He is both the sovereign owner of the seed, and the changer of the soil ; He turns a wilderness into Carmel by His Spirit ; and no ground, no heart, can be good, till He change it.

And being changed, much care must be had still in manuring ; for still that is in it, which will bring forth many weeds, is a mother to them, and but a step-mother to this seed.

I will run the way of Thy Commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my Heart.

This is true spiritual obedience ;—to study and inquire after the will of God in all our ways, what will please Him, and having found it, to follow that which is here called the *way of His commandments* ; to make this *our* way, and our business in the world, and all other things but accessories and by-works, even those lawful things that may be taken in, and used as helps in our way : as the disciples passing through the corn, plucked the ears and did eat it passing, as a by-work, but their business was to follow their Master. And whatsoever would hinder us in this way, must be watched and guarded against. To effect that, we must either remove and thrust it aside, or if we cannot do that, yet we must go over it, and trample it under foot, were it the thing or the person that is dearest to us in the world. Till the heart be brought to this state and purpose, it is either wholly void of, or very low and weak in the truth of, religion.

We place religion much in our accustomed performances, in coming to church, hearing and repeating of sermons, and praying at home, keeping a road of such and such duties. The *way of God's commandments* is more in *doing* than in *discourse*. In many, religion evaporates itself too much out by the tongue, while it

appears too little in their *ways*. Oh ! but this is the main : one act of charity, meekness, or humility, speaks more than a day's discourse. All the means we use in religion, are intended for a further end, which if they attain not, they are nothing. This end is to mortify and purify the heart, to mould it to the way of God's commandments in the whole track of our lives ; in our private converse one with another, and our retired secret converse with ourselves, to have God still before us, and His law our rule, in all we do, that He may be our *counsellor*, as this Psalm hath it ; to regulate all our designs and the works of our callings by it ; to walk *soberly, and godly, and righteously, in this present world* ; to curb and cross our own wills where they cross God's ; to deny ourselves our own humor and pride, our passions and pleasures, to have all these subdued and brought under by the power of the law of love within us :—this, and nothing below this, is the end of religion. Alas ! amongst multitudes who are called Christians, some there may be who speak and appear like it, yet how few are there who make this their business, and aspire to this, *the way of God's commandments* !

His intended course in this way, the Psalmist expresses by *running*. It is good to be in this way even in the slowest motions. Love will *creep* where it cannot *go*. But if thou art so indeed, then thou wilt long for a swifter motion. If thou do but creep, be doing, creep on, yet desire to be enabled to go. If thou goest, but yet halting and lamely, desire to be strengthened to walk straight ; and if thou walkest, let not that satisfy thee, desire to *run*. So here David did *walk* in this way but he earnestly wishes to mend his pace ; he would willingly *run*, and for that end he desires an *enlarged heart*.

Some dispute and descant too much whether they go or not, and childishly tell their steps, and would know at every pace whether they advance or not, and how much they advance, and thus amuse themselves, and spend the time of doing and going, in questioning and doubting. Thus it is with many Christians. But it were a more wise and comfortable way, to be endeavoring onwards, and, if thou make little progress, at least to be desiring to make more ; to be praying and walking, and praying that thou mayest walk faster, and that in the end thou mayest run ; not to be satisfied with anything attained, but yet, by that unsatisfiedness, not to be so dejected as to sit down, or stand still, but rather excited to go on. So it was with St. Paul, Philip. iii. 13. *Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press forward*. If any one thinks that he hath done well and run far, and will take a pause, the great Apostle is of another mind : *Not as if I had already attained*. Oh, no ! far from that, he still sets forward, as if nothing were



done : like a runner, not still looking back to see how much he hath run, but forward to what he is to run, *stretching forth* to that, inflamed with frequent looks at the mark and end. Some are retarded by looking on what is past, as not satisfied : they have done nothing, as they think, and so stand still discontented. But even in that way, it is not good to look too much to things behind : we must forget them rather, and press onwards.

Some, if they have gone on well, and possibly run for a while, yet, if they fall, then they are ready, in a desperate malcontent, to lie still, and think all is lost ; and in this peevish fretting at their falls, some men please themselves, and take it for repentance, whereas indeed it is not that, but rather pride and humor. Repentance is a more submissive, humble thing. But this is what troubles some men at their new falls, (especially if after a long time of even walking or running,) they think their project is now spoiled, their thoughts are broken off : they would have had somewhat to have rejoiced in, if they had still gone on to the end, but being disappointed of that, they think they had as good let alone, and give over. Oh ! but the humble Christian is better taught : his falls teach him indeed to abhor himself ; they discover his own weakness to him, and empty him of self-trust ; but they do not dismay him to get up and go on, not boldly and carelessly forgetting his fall, but in the humble sense of it, walking the more warily, yet not the less swiftly ; yea, the more swiftly too, making the more haste to regain the time lost by the fall. So then if you would run in this way, depend on the strength of God, and on His Spirit leading thee, that so thou mayest not fall. And yet if thou dost fall, arise, and, if thou art plunged in the mire, go to the Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and wash there ; bemoan thyself before thy Lord ; and if hurt and bleeding by thy fall, yet look to Him, desire Jesus to pity thee, and bind up and cure thy wound, washing off thy blood, and pouring in of his own.

However it is with thee, give not over, faint not, run on. And that thou mayest run the more easily and expeditely, make thyself as light as may be, *lay aside every weight*. Heb. x. 1, 2. Clog not thyself with unnecessary burdens of earth, and especially lay aside that which, of all things, weighs the heaviest, and cleaves the closest, *the sin that so easily besets us*, and is so hardly put off us, that folds so connaturally to us, and we therefore think will not hinder us much. And not only the sins that are more outward, but the inner, close-cleaving sins, the sin that most of all sits easily to us ; not only our cloak, but our inner coat, away with that too, as our Saviour says in another case ; and *run the race set before us*, our appointed stage, and that *with patience*, under all oppositions and discouragements from the world without, and from sin within. And to encourage thee in this, look to such a *cloud of witnesses*, that compasseth us about to further us, as troubles,

temptations, and sin, do to hinder us. *They* encountered the like sufferings, and were encumbered with the like sins; and yet, they ran on, and got home. Alexander would have run in the *Olympic* games if he had had kings to run with: now, in this race, kings, and prophets, and righteous persons, run; yea, all are indeed a *kingly generation*, each one heir to a crown as the *prize* of this race.

And if these encourage thee but little, then *look* beyond them, above that cloud of witnesses, to the *sun*, the *Sun of Righteousness*; looking off from all things here, that would either entangle thee or discourage thee, taking thine eye off from them, and looking to Him who will powerfully draw thee and animate thee. *Look to Jesus*, not only as thy *forerunner* in this race, but also, as thy *undertaker* in it, the *author and finisher of our faith*. His attaining the end of the race, is the pledge of thy attaining, if thou follow him cheerfully on the same encouragements that he looked to: *Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God.*

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Good reason hath David to join these together, and to desire the one as the spring and cause of the other; an *enlarged heart*, that he might *run the way of God's commandments*.

Sensible joys and consolations in God do encourage and enlarge the heart; but these are not so general to all, nor so constant to any. Love is the abounding, fixed springs of ready obedience, and will make the heart cheerful in serving God, even without those felt comforts, when He is pleased to deny or withdraw them.

In that course or race, are understood *constancy*, *activity*, and *alacrity*; and all these flow from the *enlargement of the heart*.

1. *Constancy*. A narrow, intralld heart, fettered with the love of lower things, and cleaving to some particular sins, or but some one, and that in secret, may keep foot awhile in the way of God's commandments, in some steps of them; but it must give up quickly, is not able to run to the end of the goal. But a heart that hath laid aside every weight, and the most close-cleaving and besetting sin (as it is in that forecited place in the Epistle to the Hebrews,) hath stripped itself of all that may falter or entangle it, it runs, and runs on, without fainting or wearying; it is at large, hath nothing that pains it in the race.

2. *Activity*. Not only holding on, but running, which is a swift, nimble race. It stands not bargaining and disputing,<sup>1</sup> but once knowing God's mind, there is no more question or demur. *I made haste and delayed not*, as in this Psalm the word is, did not stay upon why and wherefore: he stood not to reason the matter, but ran on. And this love, enlarging the heart, makes it abun-

dant in the work of the Lord, quick and active, despatching much in a little time.

3. *Alacrity.* All is done with cheerfulness, so, no other constraint is needful, where this overpowering, sweet constraint of love is. *I will run*, not be hauled and drawn as by force, but *skip and leap*; as the evangelic promise is, that the *lame shall leap as a hart*, and the *tongue of the dumb sing*; for in the *wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert*. Isa. xxxv. 6. The spouse desires her Beloved to *hasten as a roe and hind on the mountains of spices*, and she doth so, and each faithful soul runs towards him, to meet him in his way.

It is a sad heavy thing to do anything as in obedience to God, while the heart is straitened, not enlarged towards Him by Divine love; but that once taking possession and enlarging the heart, that inward principle of obedience makes the outward obedience sweet; it is then a natural motion. Indeed the soul runs in the ways of God, as the sun in his course, which finds no difficulty, being naturally fitted and carried to that motion; he *goes forth as a bridegroom, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race*.

This is the great point which our souls should be studious of, to attain more *eremness*, and nimbleness, and *cheerfulness*, in the ways of God; and for this end we ought to seek above all things this *enlarged heart*. It is the want of this makes us bog, and drive heavily, and run long upon little ground. Oh, my beloved, how shallow and narrow are our thoughts of God! Most even of those who are truly godly, yet, are led on by a kind of instinct, and carried they scarcely know how, to give some attendance on God's worship, and to the avoidance of gross sin, and go on in a blameless course. It is better thus, than to run to *excess of riot* and open wickedness, with the ungodly world. But, alas! this is but a dull, heavy, and languid motion, where the heart is not enlarged by the daily growing love of God. Few, few are acquainted with that delightful contemplation of God, which ventilates and raises this flame of love. Petty things bind and contract our spirits, so that they feel little joy in God, little ardent, active desire to do Him service, to crucify sin, to break and undo self-love within us, to root up our own wills to make room for His, that His alone may be ours, that we may have no will of our own, that our daily work may be to grow more like Him in the beauty of holiness. You think it a hard saying, to part with your carnal lusts and delights, and the common ways of the world, and to be tied to a strict, exact conversation all your days. But Oh! the reason of this is, because the heart is yet straitened and intralled by the base love of these mean things, and that arises from the ignorance of things higher and better. One glance of God, a touch of His love, will free and enlarge the heart, so that it can



deny all, and part with all, and make an entire renouncing of all, to follow *Him*. It sees enough in Him, and in Him alone, and therefore, can neither quietly rest on, nor earnestly desire anything beside Him.

Oh! that you would apply your hearts to consider the excellency of this way of God's commandments! Our wretched hearts are prejudiced; they think it melancholy and sad. Oh! there is no way truly joyous but this. *They shall sing in the ways of the Lord*, says the Psalmist, Psal. cxxxviii. 5. Do not men, when their eyes are opened, see a beauty in meekness, and temperance, and humility, a present delightfulness and quietness in them? Whereas in pride and passion, and intemperance, there is nothing but vexation and disquiet. And then, consider the *end* of this way, and of this race in it, *rest and peace* forever. It is the *way of peace*, both in its own nature, and in respect of its end. Did you believe that joy and glory which are set before you in this way, you would not any of you defer a day longer, but forthwith you would break from all that holds you back, and enter into this way, and run on cheerfully in it. The persuasion of those great things *above*, would enlarge and greaten the heart, and make the greatest things *here* very little in your eyes.

But would you attain to this enlarged heart for this race, as you ought to apply your thoughts to these Divine things, and stretch them on the promises made in the world, so, above all, take David's course, seek this enlargement of heart from God's own hand. For it is here propounded and laid before God by way of request: See what is my desire, I would gladly serve Thee better, and advance more in *the way of Thy commandments*; now, this I cannot do till my heart be more enlarged, and that cannot be but by Thy hand. *When thou shalt enlarge my heart*. Present this suit often: it is in His power to do it for thee. He can stretch and expand thy straitened heart, can hoist and spread the sails within thee, and then carry thee on swiftly; filling them, not with the vain air of man's applause, which readily runs a soul upon rocks and splits it, but with the sweet breathings and soft gales of His own Spirit, which carry it straight to the desired haven.

Findest thou sin cleaving to thee and clogging thee? Cry to Him:—Help, Lord! set me free from my narrow heart.—I strive but in vain without Thee; still it continues so. I know little of Thee; my affections are dead and cold towards Thee. Lord, I desire to love Thee, here is my heart; and lest it fly out, lay hold on it, and take thine own way with it; though it should be in a painful way, yet, draw it forth, yea, draw it that it may run after Thee. All is His own working, and all His motive is His own free grace. Let who will fancy themselves masters of their own hearts, and think to enlarge them by the strength of their own stretches of speculation; they alone, they alone are in the sure



and happy way of attaining it, who humbly sue and wait for this enlargement of heart from His hand who made it.

Is my Sin pardoned or not?

Men are commonly busied about other events concerning them and theirs, what shall become of this or the other, and what if this or that fall out. But the conscience once raised to this inquiry, the soul being awake to discern the hazard of eternal death, all other fears and questions are drowned and lost in this great question, Am I condemned or not? Is my sin pardoned or not?

And then, a satisfying answer received concerning this, all is quiet; the soul reposes sweetly on God, and puts all its other concerns into His hands. Let Him make me poor and despised, let Him smite and chastise me, He hath forgiven my sins; all is well. That burden taken off, the soul can go light, yea, can leap and dance under all other burdens. Oh, how it feels itself nimble, as a man eased of a load that he was even fainting under! Oh! blessed the man whose sin is taken off, *lifted from his shoulders*, (that is the word, Psal. xxxii. 1.) laid over upon Christ, who could *bear* the whole load, and *take it away*, take it out of sight, which we could never have done; no, they would have sunk us forever. That one word, *lifted*, John i. 29. signifies both and answers to the two, Isa. liii. 4, *He hath borne our grief, and carried our sorrows*; lifted them away. Oh how sweet a burden, instead of this, is that engagement of *obedience and love* to him as our Redeemer, and which is all he lays on us! If we follow him, and bear his cross, he is our strength, and bears both it and us. So then, this is the great point, the heart's ease, to be delivered from the condemning weight of sin.

And certainly, while men do not think thus, their hearts have very slight impressions of the truth of these things. I fear the most of us scarcely believe this condemnation to come, at least very shallowly, and so they cannot much consider the deliverance from it provided for us in Jesus Christ. I cannot see how it is possible for a heart persuaded of these things, to be very careful about anything beside. You who eat and drink, and labor and trade, and bestow all your time either in the pains or the pleasures of this earth, what think you of eternity? Is it a light thing for you to perish forever? After a few days vainly spent, to fall under the wrath of God forever? Oh, that you would be persuaded to think on these things!

And you who have an interest in this free and blessed estate, why are your spirits so cold, so infrequent in the thoughts of it? Why are you not rejoicing in the Lord, gladdening yourselves in secret when you remember this?—Go the world as it will, my sin

is forgiven me. Mistake me, accuse me whoso will, my God hath acquitted me in His Christ, and *he* loves me, and lives to intercede for me.

#### THE CHRISTIAN TRIUMPH.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? &c.

Is this he who so lately cried out, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?* who now triumphs, O happy man! *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*

Yes, it is the same. Pained, then, with the thoughts of that miserable conjunction with a body of death, and so crying out, who will deliver, who will separate me from that? now, now, he hath found a Deliverer to do that for him, to whom he is forever united, and he glories now in his inseparable union and unalterable love, which none can divide him from. Yea, it is through him, that presently after that word of complaint he praises God; and now, in him he triumphs. So vast a difference is there betwixt a Christian taken in himself, and in Christ! When he views himself in himself, then he is nothing but a poor, miserable, polluted, perishing wretch; but then he looks again, and sees himself in Christ, and there he is rich, and safe, and happy; he triumphs, and he glories in it, above all the painted prosperities, and against all the horrid adversities of the world; he lives in his Christ, content and happy, and laughs at all enemies.

And he extends his triumph; he makes a common good of it to all believers, speaks it in their name, *Who shall separate us?* and would have them partake of the same confidence, and speak in the same style with him. It is vain that men fancy these to be expressions of revelations, or some singularly-privileged assurances; then, they would not suit their end, which is clearly and undoubtedly, the encouragement of all the children of God, upon grounds that are peculiar to them from all the rest of the world, but common to them all, in all ages, and all varieties of condition.

It is true, all of them have not alike clear and firm apprehensions of their happy and sure estate, and scarcely any of them are alike at all times; yet, they have all and always the same right to this estate, and to the comfort of it, and when they stand in a right light to view it, they do see it so, and rejoice in it.

There be indeed some kinds of assurance that are more rare and extraordinary, some immediate glances or coruscations of the love of God upon the soul of a believer, a smile of His countenance; and this doth exceedingly refresh, yea, ravish the soul,

and enables it mightily for duties and sufferings. These He dispenses arbitrarily and freely, where and when He will. Some weaker Christians sometimes have them, while stronger are strangers to them, the Lord training them to live more contentedly by faith till the day of vision come.

And that is the other, the less ecstatical, but the more constant and fixed kind of assurance, the proper assurance of faith: the soul, by believing, cleaves unto God in Christ as he offers himself in the gospel, and thence is possessed with a sweet and calm persuasion of his love; that being the proper work, to appropriate him, to make Christ, and in him, eternal life, ours. So that it is the proper result and fruit of that its acting, especially when it acts anything strongly, to quiet the soul in him. Then, *being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ*, and from that peace, joy, yea, even *glorying in tribulation*, as there follows. And these springing, not from an extraordinary sense or view, but from the very innate virtue of faith working kindly and according to its own nature.

Therefore many Christians do prejudice their own comfort and darken their spirits, by not giving freedom to faith to act according to its nature and proper principles. They will not believe till they find some evidence, or assurance, which is quite to invert the order of the thing, and to look for fruit without setting a root for it to grow from.

Would you take Christ upon the absolute word of promise, tendering him to you, and rest on him so, this would ingraft you into life itself, for that he is, and so those fruits of the Holy Ghost would bud and flourish in your hearts. From that very believing on him, would arise this persuasion, yea, even to a gloriation, and an humble boasting in his love. *Who shall accuse—Who shall condemn—Who shall separate?*

The undivided companion and undoubted helper and preserver of this confidence of faith, is an *active love* to Christ, leading to a constant study of holiness and strife against sin, which is the grand enemy of faith, which obstructs the very vital spirits of faith, which makes it sickly and heavy in its actings, and causes the palsy in the hand of faith, so that it cannot lay so fast hold. Therefore, this you should be careful of; yea, know that of necessity it attends faith, and as faith grows, holiness will grow, and holiness growing will mutually strengthen and establish faith. The comforts of the Holy Ghost are holy, purifying comforts, and the more the soul is purified and made holy, the more is it cleared and enlarged to receive much of these comforts. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* Unholiness is as damps and filthy mists in the soul; it darkens it all.

Hence it is evident in what way Christians may and ought to

aspire to this assurance. It is their portion, and in this way they are to aspire to it, and shall find it; if not immediately, yet, let them wait and go on in this way, they shall not miscarry.

Again, it appears that this assurance is no enemy to *holy* diligence, nor a friend of *carnal* security; on the contrary, it is the only thing that doth eminently ennoble and embolden the soul for all adventures and services. Base fears and doubtings, wherein some place much of religion, (and many weak Christians seem to be in that mistake, to think it a kind of holy, spiritual temper to be questioning and doubting,) I say these base fears can never produce anything truly generous, no height of obedience: they do nothing but entangle and disable the soul for every good work. *Perfect love casts out this fear*, and works a sweet unperplexing fear, a holy weariness not to offend, which fears nothing else. And this confidence of love is the great secret of comfort, and of ability to do God service. Nothing makes so strong and healthful a constitution of soul, as pure love: it dares submit to God, and resign itself to Him; it dares venture itself in His hand, and trust His word, and seeks no more than how to please Him. A heart thus composed, goes readily and cheerfully unto all services, to do, to suffer, to live, to die, at His pleasure; and firmly stands to this, that *nothing can separate* it from that which is sufficient for it, which is all its happiness, *the love of God in Christ Jesus*.

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Now, it is no pride in a Christian, but the truest humility, to triumph and glory in this. This is it that makes all sure; this is the great comfort and the victory of the saints. He that loved us and bought us so dear, will not lightly slip from us; yea, upon no terms will he let us go, unless some stronger than he is, meet with him, and by force bereave him of us; which we know is impossible. He and his Father, who are one in themselves, and in their strength, and one in this love, are greater and stronger than all; and he that once overcame for us, always overcomes in us.

Thus he lets temptation and tribulations assault us, and thus neither disproves his love, nor endangers his right to us; yea, it doth but give proof and evidence of the invincible firmness of both. He suffers others to lie soft, and sit warm, and pamper their flesh at leisure; but he hath nobler business for his champions, his worthies, and most of all for the stoutest of them: he calls them forth to honorable services, to the hardest encounters; he sets them on, one to fight with sickness, another with poverty, another with reproaches and persecutions, with prisons and irons, and with death itself. And all this while, loves he them less, or they him? Oh, no. He looks on and rejoices to see them do valiantly; it is the joy of his heart, no sight on earth so sweet to him; and it is all the while by his subduing, and in his strength, that they hold out in the conflict, and obtain the conquest.



And thus they are the more endeared to him by these services and these adventures of love for him, and he still likewise is the more endeared to them. Certainly, the more any one suffers for Christ, the more he loves Christ: as love doth grow and engage itself by all it does and suffers, and burns hotter by what it encounters and overcomes, as by fuel added to it. As to Jesus Christ, by what he suffered for us we are the dearer to him, so he is to us by all we suffer for his sake.

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Having given the challenge and finding none to answer, and that all, the most apparent, are in a most rhetorical accumulation silenced, *tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, &c.*, he goes on confidently in the triumph, and avers his assurance of full and final victory against all imaginable power of all the creatures: *Neither death nor life*, not the fear of the most terrible death, nor the hope or love of the most desirable life. And in the height of this courage and confidence, he supposes impossible enemies, *Nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers*;—unless you take it of the angels of darkness only; but if it could be possible that the others should offer at such a thing, they would be too weak for it. No sense of any *present things*, nor apprehensions of *things to come*; not anything within the vast circle of the world above or below; *nor any creature*, can do it. Here sin is not specified, because he is speaking of outward oppositions and difficulties expressly, and because that is removed by the former challenge, *Who shall accuse?* that asserting a free and final acquittance of all sin, a pardon of the curse, which yet will never encourage any of those to sin who live in the assurance of this love. Oh, no; and these general words do include it too, *Nothing present, nor to come, &c.* So it is carried clear, and is the satisfying comfort of all whom Jesus Christ hath drawn after him, and united in his love.

It is enough; whatsoever they may be separated from, the things or persons dearest in this world, it is no matter; the jewel is safe. None can take my Christ from me, and I am safe in him, as his purchase. None can take me from him, and being still in his love, and through him in the Father's love, that is sufficient. What can I fear? What can I want? All other hazards signify nothing. How little value are they of! And for how little a while am I in danger of them! Methinks, all should look on a believer with an emulous eye, and wish his estate more than a king's.

Alas, poor creatures! rich men, great men, princes and kings, what vain things are they that you embrace and cleave to? Whatsoever they be, soon must you part. Can you say of any of them, *Who shall separate us?* Storms may arise and scatter ships that sail smoothly together in fair weather. Thou mayest be removed,

by public commotions and calamities, from thy sweet dwellings, and societies, and estates. You may even live to see and seek your parting. At last you *must* part, for you must die. Then, farewell parks and palaces, gardens and honors, and even crowns themselves. Then, dearest friends, children and wife must be parted with. *Linquenda tellus, et domus, et placens uxor.* And what hast thou left, poor soul, who hast not Christ, but that which thou wouldst gladly part with and canst not, the condemning guilt of all thy sins?

But the soul, that is in Christ, when other things are pulled away, feels little or nothing: he cleaves to Christ, and these separations pain him not. Yea, when that great separatist, death, comes, that breaks all other unions, even that of the soul and body, yet, so far is it from separating the believer's soul from its beloved Lord Jesus, that, on the contrary, it carries it into the nearest union with him, and the fullest enjoyment of him forever.

#### Sin separates the Soul from God.

Sin separates and hides His face, not only from a people that professes His name, but even from a soul that really bears His name stamped upon it. Though it cannot fully, and forever, cut off such a soul, yet, in part, and for a time, it may, yea, to be sure, it will separate and hide the face of God from them. Their daily inevitable frailties do not this: but either a course of careless walking, and many little unlawful liberties taken to themselves, that will rise and gather as a cloud, and hide the face of God; or some one gross sin, especially if often reiterated, will prove as a firm stone-wall, or rather as a brazen-wall, built up by their own hands betwixt them and Heaven, and will not be so easily dissolved or broken down; and yet, till that be, the light of His countenance, who is the life of the soul, will be eclipsed and withheld from it.

And this considered, besides that law of love that will forbid so foul ingratitude, yet, I say, this considered, even our own interest will make us wary of sinning. Though we were sure not to be yet altogether separated from the love of God by it, yet, thou who hast any persuasion of that love, dardest thou venture upon any known sin? Thou art not hazardless and free from all damage by it, if thou hast need of that argument to restrain thee. Then, before thou run upon it, sit down and reckon the expense; see what it will cost thee if thou do commit it. Thou knowest that once it cost the heart-blood of thy Redeemer to expiate it, and is that a light matter to thee? And though that paid all that score, nothing thou canst suffer being able to do anything that way, yet, as an unavoidable present fruit of it, it will draw on this damage; thou shalt be sure for a time, it may be for a long

time, possibly most of thy time, nearly all thy days, it may darken much that love of God to thee, which if thou dost but esteem, think on it. It changes not in Him, but a sad change will sin bring on thee, as to thy sight and apprehension of it. Many a sweet hour of blessed communion with thy God shalt thou miss, and either be dead and stupid in that want, or mourn after Him, and yet find, though sighs and tears continue, the door shut, yea, a dead wall raised betwixt thee and Him, and at best much straitening and pains to take it down again; contrary to other walls and buildings, which are far more easily pulled down than built up, but this is a great deal easier built up than pulled down. True, thy God could cast it down with a word, and it is His free grace that must do it, otherwise thou couldst never remove it: yet will he have thee feel thy own handy-work, and know thy folly. Thou must be at pains to dig at it, and may be it will cost thee broken bones in taking it down, pieces of it falling heavy and sad upon thy conscience, and crushing thee; as David cried out at that work, for a healing word from God, *Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.* Psal. li. 8. It will force thee to say, O fool that I was, what meant I! Oh! it is good, keeping near God, and raising no divisions. What are sins? False delights, by which a man but provides his own vexation. Now, this distance from God, and all this turmoiling, and breaking, and crying before He appears again, consider if any pleasure of sin can countervail this damage. Surely, when thou art not out of thy wits, thou wilt never make such a bargain for all the pleasure thou canst make out of any sin, to breed thyself all this pains, and all this grief, at once to displease thy God, and displease thyself, and make a partition between Him and thee. Oh, sweet and safe ways of holiness, walking with God in His company and favor! *He that orders his conversation aright, he sees the loving-kindness of the Lord:* it is shown to him; he lives in the sight of it. Psal. l. 23.

But if any such separation is made, yet, is it thy great desire to have it removed? Why then there is hope. See to it, labor to break it down, and pray to Him to help thee, and He will put forth His hand, and then it must fall. And in all thy sense of separation, look to him who *brake down the middle wall of partition.* Eph. ii. 14. There it is spoken of as betwixt men, Jews and Gentiles, but so as it was also between the Gentiles and God, who were separated from His people, and from Himself. See ver. 16: *That he might reconcile both to God in one body;* and ver. 18: *Through him we have access by one Spirit to the Father.* And then he adds, that they were *no more strangers and foreigners, dwelling on the other side of the wall, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.*

Oh, that we knew more what it were to live in this sweet soci-

ety, in undivided fellowship with God ! Alas ! how little is understood this living in Him : separated from sin in this world, which otherwise do separate from Him ; solacing our hearts in his love, and despising the base muddy delights that the world admires ; hoping for that *New Jerusalem*, where none of these walls of sin are, nor any one stone of them, and for that bright day wherein there is no cloud nor mist to hide our Sun from us.

Time to awake.

All the days of sinful nature are dark night, in which there is no right discerning of spiritual things. Some light there is of reason, to direct natural and civil actions, but no daylight. Till the sun arise it is night still, for all the stars, and the moon to help them. Notwithstanding natural speculations, that are more remote, and all prudence and policy for affairs, that come somewhat nearer to action, yet we are still in the night. And you do think that a sad life, but the truth is, we sleep on in it, and our heads are still full of new dreams which keep us sleeping. We are constantly drunk with cares or desires of sense, and so our sleep continues. Sometimes it is called *death—dead in sins*, &c. Now sleep is brother to death ; and so, by it not unfitly is the same state resembled. No spiritual life we have at all, and therefore in that sense are truly dead. But because there is in us a natural life, and in that, a capacity of spiritual life, therefore we are said to be asleep. As in a deep sleep, our soul is bound up and drowned in flesh, through a surcharge of the vapors of gross, sensible things that we glut ourselves withal ; and the condition of our wisest thoughts, in relation to our highest good, are nothing but dreams and reveries. Your projectings, and bargainings, and buildings, these be a better sort of dreams ; but your envyings, and mutual dispisings and discontents, your detracting and evil-speaking, these are more impertinent, and to yourselves more perplexing. And your sweetest enjoyments in this life, which you think most real, are but shadows of delight, a more pleasant sort of dreams. All pomps and royal solemnities, the Scripture calls *phantasies*, Acts xxv. 23. A man will not readily think so while he is in them. *Somnium narrare vigilantis est*. We do not perceive the vanity of our dreams, and know that they are so, till we be awaked. Sometimes in a dream a man will have such a thought that it is but a dream, yet doth he not thoroughly see the folly thereof, but goes on in it. The natural man may have sometimes a glance of such thoughts, that all these things he is either turmoiling or delighting in, are vanity and nothing to the purpose ; yet, he awakes not, but raves on still in them ; he shifts a little, turns on his bed as a door on its hinges, but turns not off, does not rise.



But the spiritual-minded Christian, who is indeed awake, and looks back on his former thoughts and ways, Oh how does he disdain himself, and all his former high fancies that he was most pleased with, finding them dreams! Oh what a fool, what a wretch was I, while my head was full of such stuff, building castles in the air, imagining and catching at such gains, and such preferments and pleasures, and either they still running before me, and I could not overtake them, or, if I thought I did, what have I now, when I see what it is, and find that I have embraced a shadow, false hopes, and fears, and joys! *He thinks he hath eaten, and his soul is empty.* Isa. xxix. 8. And you that will sleep on, may; but sure I am, when you come to your deathbed, if possibly you awake then, then shall you look back, with sad regret, upon whatsoever you most esteemed and gloried in under the sun. While they are coming towards you, they have some show; but, as a dream that is past, when these gay things are flown by, then we see how vain they are. As that luxurious king who caused to be painted on his tomb two fingers, as sounding one upon another, with that word, *All is not worth so much, Non tanti est.* I know not how men make a shift to satisfy themselves; but, take a sober and awakened Christian, and set him in the midst of the best of all things that are here, his heart would burst with despair of satisfaction, were it not for a hope that he hath, beyond all that this poor world either attains or is seeking after, and that hope is, indeed, the dawning of the day that is here spoken of.

*It is time to awake,* says he; *your salvation is nearer than when ye believed.* That bright day you look for, is hastening forward; it is nearer than when you began to believe. The night is far spent, the gross darkness is already past, some daylight there is, and it is every moment growing, and the perfect, full morning-light of it is very near.

#### Department of Children of the Light.

There is a happy exaltation of the heart, when it is raised in God, to despise all communion with the unholy, and the unholy ways of the world. This, my brethren, is that which I would were wrought in you by the consideration of our holy calling. *We are called to holiness, and not to uncleanness.—Ye are the children of the light and of the day.* 1 Thess. iv. 7; v. 5. Base night ways, such as cannot endure the light, do not become you. O that comeliness which the saints should study, that *decorum* which they shall keep in all their ways, one action like another, and all like Christ, living as in the light. They that converse with the best company, such persons are obliged to more decency

in apparel. We live in the light, in the company of angels of God, and Jesus Christ; and therefore should not act anything that is low or mean, unbeseeming the rank we keep, and the presence of those with whom we associate. When the king passes through the country in progress, they who see him seldom, being either to attend him in his way, or to receive him into their houses, will labor to have all things in the best order they can for the time; but they that live at court, and are daily in the king's presence, are constantly court-like in their habit and carriage, and all about them. *O followers of the Lamb*, let your garments be always white; yea, let Him be your garment: clothe yourselves with Himself; have your robes made of his spotless fleece.

Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is the substance of religion, to be like him whom we worship. Man's end and perfection is *likeness to God*. But Oh, the distance, the unlikeness, yea, the contrariety, that is fallen upon our nature. *The carnal mind is enmity to God*: the soul is, as it were, become flesh, and so most unsuitable to the Father of Spirits; it is become like the beast that perishes. Now, to repair and raise us, this was the course taken: we could not rise up to God, He came down to us, yea into us, to raise and draw us up again to Him. He became like us, that we might become like Him. God first put on man, that man might put on God. Putting on the Lord Jesus, we put on man; but that man is God, and so, in putting on man, we put on God. Thus, putting on Christ, we put on all grace: we do this, not only by studying him as our copy and example, but by real participation of his Spirit; and that, so as that daily the likeness is growing, while we are carried by that Spirit to study his example, and enabled in some measure to conform to it; so that these two grow together, *growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. He is the *armor of light* before spoken of: all our ornament and safety is in him. Some pictures of great persons you have seen, with arms and robes on at once: thus we, when clothed with Christ, have our arms and robes both on at once, yea, both in one, for He is both. So this is the great study of a Christian, to eye and read Christ much, and, by looking on him, to become more and more like him, making the impression deeper by each day's meditation and beholding of him. His Spirit in us, and that love his Spirit works, make the work easy, as sympathies do. And still the more the change is wrought, it becomes still the more easy to work it. This is excellently described by this Apostle, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

Now we see our business: Oh that we had hearts to it! It is

high, it is sweet, to be growing more and more Christ-like every day. What is the purchase or conquest of kingdoms to this? Oh, what are we doing, who mind not this more? Even they whose proper work it is, how remiss are they in it, and what small progress do they make! Are we less for the world and ourselves, and more for God, this year than the former?—more meek and gentle, abler to bear wrongs, and to do good for them, more holy and spiritual in our thoughts and ways, more abundant and fervent in prayer? I know there will be times of deadness, and winter seasons, even in the souls of living Christians; but it is not always so, it will come about yet; so that, take the whole course of a Christian together, he is advancing, putting on still more of Christ, and living more in Him. There is a closer union betwixt the soul and this its spiritual clothing, than betwixt the body and its garments: that doth import a transformation into Christ, put on as a new life, or a new self. The Christian by faith doth this: he puts off himself, old carnal self, and instead thereof, puts on Jesus Christ, and thenceforward hath no more regard of that old self, than of old cast clothes, but is all for Christ, joys in nothing else. This is a mystery which cannot be understood but by partaking of it.

My brethren, learn to have these thoughts frequent and occurrent with you on all occasions. Think, when about anything, how would Christ behave himself in this? Even so let me endeavor.

You will possibly say, they that speak thus, and advise thus, do not do thus. Oh, that that were not too true! Yet there be some that be sincere in it, and although it be but little that is attained, yet the very aim is excellent, and somewhat there is that is done by it. It is better to have such thoughts and desires, than altogether to give it up; and the very desire, being serious and sincere, does so much change the habitude and usage of the soul and life, that it is not to be despised.

Now follows, *And make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.* And it will follow necessarily. We hear much to little purpose. Oh, to have the heart touched by the Spirit with such a word as is here! It would untie it from all these things. These are the words, the very reading of which wrought so with Augustine, that of a licentious young man, he turned a holy faithful servant of Jesus Christ. While you were without Christ, you had no higher nor other business to do, then to attend and serve the flesh; but once having put Him on, you are other men, and other manners do become you. *Alia atas alios mores postulat.*

This forbids not eating, and drinking, and clothing, and providing for these, nor decency and comeliness in them. The *putting on of Christ* does not bar the sober use of them: yea, the

moderate providing for the necessities of the flesh, while thou art tied to dwell in it, that may be done in such a way as shall be a part of thy obedience and service to God. But to *lay in provisions for the lusts of it*, is to victual and furnish His enemy and thine own : for the *lusts of the flesh* do strive against God's Spirit, and war against thy soul. Gal. v. 17 ; 1 Pet. ii. 11.

This was the quarrel betwixt God and His own people in the wilderness. Bread for their *necessities*, He gave them, but they required meat for their *lusts*, (which should rather have been starved to death than fed,) and many of them fell in the quarrel. He gave them their desire, but gave them a plague with it, and they died with the meat between their teeth. Many who seem to follow God, and to have put on Christ, yet continuing in league with their lusts, and providing for them, they are permitted awhile so to do, and are not withheld from their desire, and seem to prosper in the business ; but, though not so sudden and sensible as that of the Israelites, there is no less certain a curse joined with all thy purchase and provide for that unhallowed use. It is certainly the posture and employment of most of us, even who are called *Christians*, to be purveyors for the flesh, even for the *lusts of it* ; (*ad supervacuum sudare* ; ) these lusts comprehending all sensual, and all worldly, fleshly, self-pleasing projects. Even some things that seem a little more decent and refined, come under this account. What are men commonly doing but projecting and laboring, beyond necessity, for fuller and finer provision for *back and belly*, and to feed their pride, and raise themselves and theirs somewhat above the condition of others about them ? And where men's interests meet in the teeth, and cross each other, there arise heart burnings and debates, and an evil eye one against another, even on fancied prejudice, where there is nothing but crossing a humor. So the grand idol is their own will, that must be provided for and served in all things, that takes them up early and late, how they may be at ease, and pleased, and esteemed, and honored. This is the *making provision for the flesh and its lusts*, and from this are all they called who have *put on Christ* ; not to a hard, mean, unpleasant life, instead of that other, but to a far more high and more truly pleasant life, that disgraces all those their former pursuits which they thought so gay while they knew no better. There is a transcendant sweetness in Christ, that puts the flesh out of credit. *Put on Christ*, thy robe royal, and *make no provision for the flesh* ; surely thou wilt not then go and turmoil in the kitchen. A soul clothed with Christ, stooping to any sinful delight, or an ardent pursuit of anything earthly, though lawful, doth wonderfully degrade itself. Methinks it is as a king's son in his princely apparel, playing the scullion, sitting down to turn the spits. A soul living in Christ indeed, hath no vacancy for the superfluous, luxurious demands of flesh, yea,



supplies the very necessities of it with a kind of regret. *A necessitatibus meis libera me, Domine*, said one: *Deliver me, Lord from my necessities.*

Oh, raise up your spirits, you that pretend to anything in Christ; delight in him, and let his love satisfy you at all times. What need you go a begging elsewhere? All you would add, makes you the poorer, abates so much of your enjoyment of him; and what can compensate that? *Put on the Lord Jesus*, and then view yourselves, and see if you be fit to be slaves to flesh and earth.

These two, *Put on the Lord Jesus*, and *Make no provision*, are directly the representation of the Church, Apoc. xii. A woman clothed with the sun, and having the moon under her feet, needed borrow no beauty from it, or anything under it. She left the scarlet and the purple, and the gold, to the harlot after spoken of, for her dressing.

The service of the flesh is a work the Christian cannot fold to, till he forgets what clothes he has on. This is all, my brethren. Oh that we could be once persuaded to *put on Christ*, and then resolve and remember to do nothing unbecoming that attire!

They shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.

All sorts of kindnesses, even outward and common mercies, in those shall he understand His goodness: in recoveries and deliverances from dangers, and temporal blessings, be their portion in them less or more, though the things be common, yet they come to be his own by a particular stamp of love, which to others they have not. And the children of God know it, they can find it out, and can read it, though the world that looks on it cannot. And indeed, to them the lowest things are disposed of, in order to the highest: their daily bread is given them by that same love that gives them Christ: all is given in Him. So the curse is taken away, and all is sweetened with a blessing. *A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the abundance of the wicked.*

But the things they chiefly prize and desire, as indeed they deserve so to be, are of another sort: in their very being and nature, are love-tokens, effects of that peculiar free-grace that chose them to life. And this is called the *light of God's countenance*. *His everlasting love*. Now *they that are wise, and observe these things, they shall understand this loving-kindness*. Not that they first are thus *wise*, before they partake of this loving-kindness; no; by it this *wisdom* was given them; but this promise is made to their improvement of that gift, and walking in those ways of *wisdom*. Not only are they loved of God, but they shall *understand* it. He will manifest Himself to them, and tell them He loves them. And

the more they walk in these ways, the more clearly shall they perceive and powerfully find His love manifested to them.

This is the highest inducement that can be to such as have any interest in it. When this love hath but once touched them, though as yet they know it not certainly, yet it works that esteem and affection that nothing can be admitted into comparison with it. While carnal men wallow in the puddle, these are the crystal streams a renewed soul desires to bathe in, even the love of God. O ! let me find that ; no matter what I have, or what I want. In poverty, or any distressed, forsaken condition, one good word or good look from Him, makes me up. I can sit down content and cheerful, and rejoice in that, though all the world frown on me, and all things look dark and comfortless about me, that is a piece of Heaven within the soul. Now, of this experimental, understanding knowledge of this love, there are different degrees ; there is a great latitude in this. To some are afforded, at some times, little glimpses and inlets of it in a more immediate way ; but these stay not : *suavis hora, sed brevis mora*. Others are upheld in the belief of it, and live on it by faith : though it shine not so clear, yet, a light they have to walk by. Though the sun shines not bright out to them all their life, yet, they are led home, and understand so much love in their way, as shall bring them to the fulness of it in the end. Others, having passed most of the day, have a fair glimpse in the very evening or close of it. But, howsoever, they that walk in this way by this light, whatsoever measure they have of it, are led by it to the land of light. The connexion here made, you see, *They that wisely observe these things, shall understand this loving-kindness*. A wise man observing of God's ways, and ordering our own to His mind, is the certain way to attain much experienced knowledge of his love.

This love is most free, and, from the beginning to the end, works of itself ; but in the method of it, God hath thus linked things together, made one portion of grace, in the use of it, draw on another. And this His children should prudently consider. There is such a like speech, Psal. l. 23. *Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth Me : and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God*.

The contemplation of God in His works, sets the soul open to receive the influences of this love : by looking towards Him, it draws His eye towards it, as one look of love draws on another. Certainly, many that have some desire of the light of God's countenance, and evidences of His love, yet, in not applying their souls to consider Him, do much injure themselves.

Heavenly thoughts do refine the soul, as fire works itself higher and to a purer flame by stirring. To be blessing God for His goodness, giving Him praise in the view of His works in the world, and for His church, and particularly for ourselves, this both dis-

poses the heart to a more suitable temper for receiving divine comforts, and invites Him to let them flow into it. For if He have such acknowledgments for general goodness and common mercies, how much larger returns shall He have upon the discoveries of special love! Is it a sight of God as reconciled, thou wouldst have? Now, praise sets a man amongst the angels, and they behold His face.

Again, *action*, walking in His ways humbly and carefully, and so waiting, never wants a successful return of much love. How can He who is goodness itself, hide and reserve Himself from a soul that yields up itself to Him, hath no delight but to please Him, hates and avoids what may offend Him? This, surely, is the way, if there is any under Heaven, to enjoy communion with Him.

They that forget Him, and disregard their ways, and are no way careful to order them to His liking, do but delude themselves with mistaken fancies of mercy. I beseech you, be warned. There cannot be solid peace in the ways of sin; *no peace to the wicked, saith my God*. Outward common favors you may share for a time; but these have a curse with them to you, and you shall quickly be at an end of these receipts: and then you would look towards Him for some persuasions of His loving-kindness, but are likely to find nothing but frowns and displeasure. *O! consider this, ye that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you.*

Even they who have some title to this love of God, and are desiring further evidence of it, yet, do often sit exceedingly in their own light, and work against their end, still bent on that assurance they would have, and yet neglecting the way to it, which certainly is in a manner to neglect itself. Were they more busied in honoring God, doing Him what service they can in their station, striving against sin, acknowledging His goodness to the world, and even to themselves, that they are yet in the region of hope, not cut off in their iniquities, thus *offering praise*, and *ordering their conversation aright*, submitting unto Him, and giving Him glory; their assurances and comforts, in the measure He thinks fit, would come in due time, and sooner in this way than in any other they could take.

Observe these things, beware of sin, and *ye shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord*. It is true, this love of God changes not, nor hangs on thy carriage, nor on anything without itself; yea, all our good hangs on it; but know, as to the knowledge and apprehension of it, it depends much on the holy frame of thy heart and the exact regulation of thy ways. Sin obstructs and darkens all; those are the clouds and mists; and where any believer is adventurous on the ways of sin, he shall smart for it. Where sin is, there will be a storm, as Chrysostom's word

is of Joshua. The experience of all witnesseth this. No strength of faith will keep out floods of doubting and troublous thoughts, where any novel sin hath opened a gap for them to rush in by. See David, Psalm li., expressing himself as if all were to begin again, his joy taken away, and his bones broken, and to sense all undone : nothing will serve but a *new creature*. *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*

There is a congruity in the thing itself, and God hath so ordered it, that vexation and anguish should still attend sin, and the ways of holiness be ways of peace. Say men what they will, great falls leave wounds and smart behind them, and they must be washed with sharper liquor before balm and oil be poured into them. And not only will more notorious breaches disturb thy peace, but a tract of careless and fruitless walking. If thou abate of thy attendance on God, and thy fear cool towards Him lagging and falling downwards to something you are caring for and taken with, you shall find an estrangement : it may be insensible at first and for a while because of thy sloth, that thou dost not observe diligently how it is with thee ; but, after a time, it shall be more easily known but more hardly mended. And there are none of us but might find much more of God in this our way homewards, if the foolishness and wanderings of our hearts did not prevent us.

Be persuaded, then, you whose hearts He hath wrought for Himself, to attend better on him, and the advantage shall be yours, doubt it not. And though for a time you find it not, yet wait on, and go on in that way ; it shall not disappoint you. The more you let go of the false, vain comforts of the world for His sake, the more richly you shall be furnished with His. Oh ! we make not room for them ; that is the great hinderance. Consider Him, behold His works, bless Him, confess Him always worthy of *praise for His goodness, and His wonderful works to the children of men*, however He deal with thee in particular ; and assuredly, He shall deal graciously with thee, and ere long thou shalt find it, and be forced to acknowledge it. Though it may be thou want these bright shinings of comforts thou wouldst have, yet, looking to Him, and walking before Him, *observing these things*, thou shalt have of His light to lead thee on, and a calm within ; sweet peace, not that height of joy thou desirest.

There are often calm, fair days without storm, though it be not so clear sun-shine ; and in such days a man may travel comfortably. I would have Christians called off from a perplexed overpressing of this point of their particular assurance. If we were more studious to please Him, forgetting ourselves, we should find Him remember us the more ; yet, we should not do so for this neither, but simply for Himself. In a word, this is thy wisdom ; mind thy duty, and refer to Him thy comfort.



Thy Commandment is exceeding broad.

He speaks of all as one, I conceive, for that tie and connexion of them all, on account of which he that breaks one, is guilty of all. A rule they are, and are so one, as a rule must be. One authority runs through all: that is the golden thread they are strung on. Break that any where, and all the pearls drop off.

The Confidence of Faith.

*Although the fig-tree shall not blossom.*] This sometimes does, and at any time may, befall a land; but, however, it is very useful to put such cases. It is true there is great odds betwixt real and imagined distresses; yet, certainly, the frequent viewing of its picture, though it is only in the imagination, hath so much likeness as somewhat abates the strangeness and frightfulness of its true visage when it comes.

There is a foolish pre-apprehension of possible evils, which, whether they come or not, does no good, but makes evils to come perplexingly beforehand, and antedates their misery, and adds the pain of many others that will never come. These are the fumes of a dark, distempered humor, vain fears, which vex and trouble some minds at present, and do not waste any thing of any grief to come after. But calmly and composedly to sit down and consider evil days coming, any kind of trials that probably, yea, or possibly, may arrive, so as to be ready to entertain them without astonishment: this is a wise and useful exercise of the mind, and takes off much of the weight of such things, breaks them in falling on us, that they come not so sad down, when they light first upon the apprehension. Thus, it is true, nothing comes unawares to a wise man. He hath supposed all, or as bad as any thing that can come, hath acquainted his mind with the horridest shapes, and therefore, when such things appear, will not so readily start at them.

This I would advise to be done, not only in things we can more easily suffer, but in those we think would prove hardest and most indigestible, to inure thy heart to them; not to be like some, who are so tender-fancied, that they dare not so much as think of some things, the death of a dear friend, or husband, or wife, or child. That is oftener to be viewed, rather than any other event. Bring thy mind to it, as a starting horse to that whereat it does most startle—What if I should be bereft of such a person, such a thing? This would make it much more tolerable when thou art put to it. What if the place where I live, were visited with all at once in some degree, pestilence, and sword, and famine? How should I look on them? Could my mind keep its own place and standing, fixed on God in such a case? What if I were turned out of my

good furniture and warm house, and stripped not only of accessory, but necessary things; (as here he supposes not only the failing of delicacies, the fig-trees, wine, and olives, but of common necessary food, the fields not yielding meat, and the flocks cut off:) thy little ones crying for bread, and thou hast none for them? You little know what the tenderest and delicatest among you may be put to. These times have given many real instances, within these kingdoms, of strange changes in the condition of all ranks of persons. Or think, if thou abhorrest that, What if I were smitten with blotches or loathsome sores on my flesh, or if, by any accident, I should lose an arm, or an eye, or both eyes? What if extreme poverty, and sickness, and forsaking of friends, come all at once? Could I welcome these, and make up all in God,—find riches, and friends, and fullness in Him? Most men, if they would speak truly to such cases, must declare them insufferable:—I were undone if such a thing betel me, or such a comfort were taken from me. Most would cry out, as Micah did, Judg. xviii. 24, *Ye have taken away my gods; for so are these things our hearts cleave to and principally delight in.* He that worships mammon, his purse is the sensiblest piece of him: he is broke, if fire, or ravage of war, throw him out of his nest, and empty it. He that makes his belly his god, (such they are the Apostles speaks of, Phil. iii. 19.) how could he endure this case the Prophet puts here, the failing of vines, of flocks and herds?

It were good to add to the supposition of want, somewhat of the reality of it; sometimes to abridge thyself of things thou desirest and lovest, to inure thy appetite to a refusal of what it calls for; to practise somewhat of poverty, to learn to need few things.

It is strange, men should be so foolish as to tie themselves to these things, which have neither satisfying content in them, nor certain abode. And *why shouldst thou set thine eyes on things which are not*, says Solomon, Prov. xxiii. 5,—*a vapour, a fancy!* How soon may you be parted! He who is the true God, God alone, how soon can He pull the false gods from you, or you from them!—as in that word, Job xxvii. 8: *What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?* Like that case in the parable, Luke xii. 19: *Soul, take thine ease.* A strange inference from full barns! That were sufficient provision for a horse, a fit happiness for it; but for a soul, though it were to stay, how gross and base a portion! But it cannot stay neither: *This night thy soul shall be required of thee.*

The only firm position is this of the Prophet, *Yet will I rejoice in the Lord.* And such times indeed are fit to give proof of this, to tell thee whether it be so indeed, where thy heart is built. While thy honor, and wealth, and friends are about thee, it is hard to know whether these props bear thee up, or another, an Invisible supporter; but when these are plucked away, and thou art

destitute round about, then it will appear if thy strength be in God, if these other things were but flourishes about thee, and thou laidst no weight on them at all. He that leans on these, must fall when these fall, and his *hope is cut off*, and his *trust as a spider's web*. *He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand.* Job viii. 14, 15. They that clasp their hearts about their houses or estates, within a while they are either sadly pulled asunder, or swept away together.

But, Oh! the blessed, the high condition of a soul set on God, untied, independent from all things beside Him, its whole dependence and rest placed on Him alone, sitting loose to all the world, and so not stirred with alterations! Yea, amid the turnings upside-down of human things, if the frame of the heaven and earth were falling to pieces,\* the heart founded on Him who made it, abides unmoved; *the everlasting arms are under it*, and bear it up.

Do ye believe, my brethren, that there is such a thing, that it is no fancy? Yea, all is but fancy beside it. Do you believe this? Why, then, is one day after another put off, and this not attained, nor the soul so much as entered or engaged to a serious endeavor after it, looking on all things else, compared to this noble design, as vanity? How often and how easily are their joys damped, who rejoice in other things, and their hopes broken! What they expected most, soon proves a lie, as the word spoken of the *olive*, here signifies; as if the *labor* of it should lie (*spem mentita seges*,) —a fair vintage or harvest promised, and either withered with drougt, or drowned with rain: indeed, it lies at the best! But the soul that places its joy on God, is still fresh and green when all are withered about it. Jer. xvii. 8: *Acquaint thyself with Him* betimes in ease. It is a sad case, to be making acquaintance with Him, when thou shouldest most make use of His friendship, and find comfort in His love.

Now, this joy in God cannot remain in an impure, unholy soul, no more than Heaven and Hell can mix together. An impure, unholy soul, I call not that which is stained with sin, for no other are under the sun; all must then quit all pretensions to that estate; but such a one as willingly entertains any sinful lust or way of wickedness. That delight and this are directly opposite. And certainly, the more the soul is refined from all delights of sin, yea, even from sinless delights of sense and of this present world, it hath the more capacity, the fitter and the larger room, for this pure, heavenly delight.

No language can make a natural man understand what this thing is, *to rejoice in God*. Oh! it is a mystery. Most men mind poor childish things, laughing and crying in a breath, at trifles; easily puffed up, and as easily cast down. But even the children

\* Si fractus illabatur orbis.



of God are too little acquainted with this their portion. Which of you find this power in the remembrance of God, that it doth overflow and drown all other things, both your worldly joys and worldly sorrows, that you find them not? And thus it would be, if we knew Him. Is He, then, our Father, and yet we know Him not?

Although all should fail, yet, rejoice in Him who fails not, who alters not. He is still the same in Himself, and to the sense of the soul that is knit to Him, is then sweetest when the world is bitterest. When other comforts are withdrawn, the loss of them brings this great gain, so much the more of God and His love imparted, to make all up. They that ever found this, could almost wish for things that others are afraid of. If we knew how to improve them, His sharpest visits would be His sweetest: thou wouldest be glad to catch a kiss of His hand while He is beating thee, or pulling away something from thee that thou lovest, and bless Him while He is doing so.

*Rejoice in God, although the fig-tree blossom not, &c.* Yea, rejoice in these hardest things, as His doing. A heart rejoicing in Him, delights in all His will, and is surely provided for the most firm joy in all estates; for if nothing can come to pass beside, or against, His will, then cannot that soul be vexed with delights in Him, and hath no will but His, but follows Him in all times, in all estates, not only when He shines bright on them, but when they are clouded. That flower which follows the sun, doth so even in cloudy days: when it doth not shine forth, yet it follows the hidden course and motion of it. So, the soul that moves after God, keeps that course when He hides His face; is content, yea, is glad at His will in all estates, or conditions, or events. And though not only all be withered and blasted without, but the face of the soul little better within to sense, no flourishing of graces for the present, yet, it rejoices in Him, and in that everlasting covenant that still holds, *ordered in all things and sure*, as the sweet singer of Israel sweetly expresses it, 2 Sam. xxv. 5: *For this*, says he, *is all my salvation, and all my desire, ALTHOUGH He make it not to grow.* That is a strange *although*, and yet is he satisfied even in that.

This joy in God, as *my God, the God of my salvation*, ought to exercise the soul in the darkest and worst times; and it ought to stick to it, not to let go this confidence, still expecting salvation from Him, and resting on Him for it, though not having those senses and assurances that thou desirest. This, weak believers are easily beaten from, by temptation. But we are to stand to our right in Him, even when we see it not. And when it is said to thee, as in Psalm iii., that *there is no help for thee in God*, tell all that say so, they lie: *He is my God, my glory, and the lifter up of my head*; as there he speaks.

Rejoice in Him still as *thy God*; and, however, rejoice in Him



as God. *I will rejoice in Jehovah*, glad that He is God, that His enemies cannot unsettle nor reach His throne, that He rules, and is glorious in all things, that He is self-blessed, and needs nothing. This is the purest and highest kind of rejoicing in Him, and is certainly most distant and most free from alteration, and hath, indeed, most of Heaven in it.

Christ our Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption.

It should be considered, my brethren, Christ is daily held out, and none are excluded or accepted, all are invited, be they what they will, who have need of him and use for him: and yet, who is persuaded? Oh, *who hath believed our report?* One hath his *farm*, another his *aven*, each some engagement or another. Men are not at leisure for Christ. Why? You think, may be, you have received him. If it be so, you are happy. Be not deluded. Have you received him? Do you find him then living and ruling within you? Are your eyes upon him? Do you wait on him, early and late, to see what his will is? Is your soul glad in him? Can you, in distress, sickness, or poverty, clasp to him, and find him sweet, and allay all with this thought, *However things go with me, yet, Christ is in me?* Doth your heart cleave to him? Certainly, if he be in you, it will be thus; or, at least, your most earnest desire will be, that it may be thus.

Men will not believe how hard a matter it is, to believe the fullness and sufficiency of Jesus Christ, till they be put to it in earnest to make use of him, and then they find it: when sin and death are set before their view, and discovered in their native colors unto the soul, when a man is driven to that, *What shall I do to be saved?* then, then is the time to know what notion he hath of Christ. And as the difficulty lies in this, in the first awakening of the conscience from sin, so, in after-times of temptation and apprehension of wrath, when, upon some new-added guiltiness, or a new sight of the old, in a frightful manner, *sin reviveth, and the soul dies*, it is struck dead with the terrors of the law,—then to keep thy hold, and find another life in Christ, the law and justice satisfied, and so the conscience quieted in him: this is indeed to believe.

It is a thing of huge difficulty, to bring men to a sense of their natural misery, to see that they have need of a Saviour, and to look out for one: but then, being brought to that, it is no less, if not more difficult, to persuade them that Christ is he: that, as they have need of him, so they need no more, he being able and sufficient for them. All the waverings and fears of misbelieving minds, do spring from dark and narrow apprehensions of Jesus Christ. All the doubt is, not of their interest, as they imagine: they who say so, and think it so, do not perceive the bottom and root of

their own malady. They say, they do no whit doubt but that he is able enough, and his righteousness large enough, but that all the doubt is, *if he belong to me*. Now, I say, this doubt arises from a defect and doubt of the former, wherein you suspect it not. Why doubtest thou that he belongs to thee? Dost thou flee to him, as lost and undone in thyself? Dost thou renounce all that can be called thine, and seek thy life in him? Then he is thine. *He came to seek and to save that which was lost*. Oh, but I find so much, not only former, but still daily renewed and increasing guiltiness. Why, is he a sufficient Saviour, or is he not? If thou dost say, he is not, then it is manifest that here lies the defect and mistake. If thou sayest, he is, then hast thou answered all thy objections of that kind: much guiltiness, much or little, old or new, neither helps nor hinders, as to thy interest in him and salvation by him. And for dispelling of these mists, nothing can be more effectual than the letting in of those Gospel beams, the clear expressions of his riches and fullness in the Scriptures, and eminently this, *Made of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*.

*Wisdom.* Both *objectively* and *effectively*. *Objectively*, I mean, our wisdom, as all our wisdom lies in the right knowledge and apprehension of him. And this suits to the Apostle's present discourse. The *Jews* would have a *sign*, and the *Gentiles*, *wisdom*; but *We*, says he, *preach Christ*. So, ch. ii. ver. 2: *I determined to know nothing, save Christ crucified*. He was learnedly bred, and knew many things beside, much of nature, and much of the law; but all this was, to him, obsolete, useless stuff: it was as if he never had heard of or known any thing else but Jesus Christ. We may know other things, but this, and this alone, is our wisdom, *to know him, and him crucified*. Particularly, we may have knowledge of the law, and by it the knowledge of sin; but in relation to our standing before God, and so, our happiness, which is the greatest point of wisdom, Jesus Christ is alone, and is all. And the more firmly a soul eyes Christ, and loses all other knowledge and itself in contemplating him, the more truly wise and heavenly it is.

And *effectively* he is our wisdom. All our right knowledge of him and belief in him, flow from himself, are derived from him, and sent into our souls. His Spirit is conveyed into ours; a beam of himself, as of the sun. This Sun of righteousness is not seen but by his own light; so that every soul that is made wise unto salvation, that is brought to apprehend Christ, to cleave to him, and repose on him, it is by an emission of Divine light from himself, that shows him, and leads unto him. And so we know God in him. There is no right knowledge of the Father but in the Son. God dwelling in the *man, Christ*, will be found or known no where else; and they that consider and worship God out of

Christ, do not know or worship the true God, but a false notion and fancy of their own.

The *Shechinah*, the *habitation of the Majesty*, is Jesus Christ: there He dwells as between the cherubims over the mercy-seat. To apprehend God so as to love Him and trust in Him all our life, to hope to find favor and bliss with Him, this is the only wise knowledge of Him. Now, this alone is in Christ, and from him. He contains this representation of God, and gives his own light to see it. So that a Christian's desire should be, in relation to Jesus Christ, that of David in reference to the Temple, as a figure of him, *One thing have I desired of Him, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord; that I may get in to Christ, to know God there, to behold the beauty of the Lord.* There we see beauty indeed, the Father's glory, and so, as *our Father* reconciled to us, we see Him *merciful and gracious*. And as we should desire to *behold*, so, still, to *inquire in His Temple*, to advance in the knowledge of God, studying Him in Christ: we are to admire what we see, and to seek still to see more. And know, that this knowledge of God, as we have it *in Christ*, so it is *from him*. He reveals the Father: he came from His bosom for that purpose. We cannot believe on him, cannot come near God through him, but as he lets forth of his light, to conduct and lead us in, yea, powerfully to draw in, for his light does so. Now, knowing and apprehending him by his own light, his Spirit, the Apostle clears it, that this is our *wisdom*, by those rich titles added, according to which we find him to us, when we receive from him that wisdom by which we apprehend him aright and lay hold on him, then: *made unto us righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.*

*Righteousness.* This doubtless is meant of the righteousness by which we are justified before God. And he is *made this to us*: applied by faith, *His* righteousness becomes *ours*. That exchange made, our sins are laid over upon him, and his obedience put upon us. This is the great glad tidings, that we are made righteous by Christ. It is not a righteousness wrought by us, but given to us, and put upon us. This carnal reason cannot comprehend, and being proud, therefore rejects and argues against it; says, *How can this thing be?* But faith closes with it, and rejoices in it. Without either doing or suffering, the sinner is acquitted and justified, and stands as guiltless of breach, yea, as having fulfilled the whole law. And happy they who thus fasten upon this righteousness! They may lift up their faces with gladness and boldness before God: whereas the most industrious, self-saving justiciary, though in other men's eyes and his own, possibly, for the present, he makes a glittering show, yet, when he shall come to be examined of God, and tried according to the Law, he shall be covered with shame, and confounded in his folly and guiltiness.

But faith triumphs over self-unworthiness, and sin, and death, and the Law, shrouding the soul under the mantle of Jesus Christ; and there it is safe. All accusations fall off, having no where to fasten, unless some blemish could be found in that righteousness in which faith hath wrapt itself. This is the very spring of solid peace, and fills the soul with peace and joy. But still men would have something within themselves to make out the matter, as if this robe needed any such piecing; and not finding what they desire, thence disquiet and unsettlement of mind arise.

True it is, that this faith purifies the heart, and works holiness, and all graces flow from it; but in this work of justifying the sinner, it is alone, and cannot admit of any mixture. This well understood, the soul that believes on Jesus Christ, will not let go for all deficiency in itself; and yet, so resting on him, will not be slothful nor regardless of any duty of holiness. Yea, this is the way to abound in all the fruits of the Spirit, first to have that *wisdom* from him, rightly to apprehend and apply him as our *righteousness*, and then shall we find all furniture of grace in him; he will likewise be *sanctification*. Say not, Unless I find some measure of *sanctification*, what right have I to apply to him as my *righteousness*? This inverts the order, and disappoints thee of both. Thou must first, without finding, yea, or seeking any thing in thyself but misery and guiltiness, lay hold on him as thy *righteousness*; or else thou shalt never find *sanctification* by any other endeavor or pursuit.

He it is that is *made sanctification to us*, and out of him we seek it in vain. Now, first he must be *thy righteousness*, before thou find him *thy sanctification*. Simply, as a guilty sinner, thou must flee to him for shelter; and then, being come in, thou shalt be furnished out of his fulness, with *grace for grace*. As a poor man pursued by the justiciary, fleeing to a strong castle for safety, and being in it, finds it a rich palace, and all his wants supplied there.

This misunderstanding of that method, is the cause of that darkness and discomfort, and withal of that deadness and defect of graces, that many persons go drooping under, who will not take this way, the only straight and sure way of life and comfort. Now,

*Sanctification* he is to us, not only as a perfect pattern, but as a powerful principle. It is really the spirit of Christ in a believer, that crucifies the world, and purges out sin, and forms the soul to his likeness. It is impossible to be holy, not being in him; and being truly in him, it is as impossible not to be holy. Our pothering and turmoiling without him, makes us lose our labor; and in this point, indeed, *little wit makes much labor*.

*Redemption*. Sin is often prevailing even in believers, and there-withal discomforts and doubts arising, as it cannot other-



wise choose. Oh, how do they groan and sigh as captives still to the law of sin and death? Well there is in our Lord Jesus help for that too. He is *redemption*; that is the complement and fullness of deliverance. The price he paid once for all: now he goes on to work that deliverance by conquest, which he bought by ransom. It is going on even when we feel it not, and within a little while, it shall be perfected, and we shall see all the host of our enemies who pursued us, as Israel saw the Egyptians, lie dead upon the shore. Courage! that day is coming.

And all this is, *That he that glories, may glory in the Lord.* Is it reasonable? No self-glorying: the more faith, the less will there be still of that. A believer is nothing in himself: all is Christ's, Christ is his all. That treasurer who, being called to an account, because that out of nothing he had enriched himself suddenly, many thought he would have been puzzled with it; but he, without being much moved, next morning came before the king in an old suit that he wore before he got that office, and said, "Sir, this suit on my back is mine, but all the rest is thine." So, our old suit is ours, all the rest Christ's, and he allows it well. And in the full and pure glory that ascends to God in this work, are we to rejoice more than in the work itself as our salvation. There is an humble kind of boasting that becomes a Christian. *My soul shall glory (or make her boast) in God, says David all the day long.* What was I before I met with Christ, thinks a believer, and now what am I? And, upon that thought, he wonders and loves. But most of the wonder is yet to come; for he conceives but little *what we shall be.*

#### Meekness under Correction.

Thus, likewise, in private personal correctings, let us learn to behave ourselves meekly and humbly, as the children of so great and good a Father; whatsoever He inflicts, not to murmur, nor entertain a fretful thought of it. Besides the undutifulness, and unseemliness of it, how vain is it! What gain we by struggling and casting up our hand to cast off the rod, but the more lashes? Our only way is, to kneel and fold under His hands, and kiss His rod, and, even while He is smiting us, to be blessing Him, sending up confessions of His righteousness, and goodness, and faithfulness, only entreating for the turning away of his wrath, though it should be with the continuing of our affliction. That is here the style of the Prophet's prayer, *Correct me, O Lord, but not in anger.* And, according to this suit, even where troubles are chastisements for sin, yet a child of God may find much sweetness, reading much of God's love in so dealing with him, in not suffering him to grow wanton and forget Him, as, in much ease, even His own children sometimes do. And as they may find

much of God's love to them in sharp corrections, they may raise and act much of their love to Him in often-repeated resignments and submissions of themselves, and ready consenting to, yea, rejoicing in His good pleasure, even in those things which to their flesh and sense are most unpleasant.

In returning and rest ye shall be saved.

In leaving off the pains ye take in messages and journeys to Egypt, in humbly and quietly composing yourselves to wait on Me, and trust in Me; submitting to My hand, in what I bring upon you, and from the same hand, Mine alone, expecting deliverance in due time.—This does not bar the use of all lawful means, but as it shuts out perplexing cares and turmoil even in those good means, so it expressly forbids all intermeddling with all unwarranted ways, such as God doth not direct us to, but rather dissuades us from.

And if this be the safest way, surely it is the sweetest, easiest way. There cannot be anything easier than to be quiet and sit still, to rest and trust, and so be safe and strong. And as it is in this particular, so generally, it is in all the ways of God; they are the only easy, peaceable, sweet ways, with the least pains, and the surest advantage. And the ways of disobedience, besides what comes after, are, even for the present, more turbulent, laborious, perplexed ways. What a hurry and pother are men put in to serve their lusts, or their ambition, when, if they attain their object, it does not quit the cost and the pains; besides that of their hopes mock them, and after long pursuit, they embrace a shadow. Thus men woo their own vexation, and take a great deal more pains to be miserable, than they would be put to, to make them happy. What a pity to pay so dear for nothing, to give their riches and treasures, and to be at pains too to carry them to a people that shall not profit them (*et oleum et operam*;) both their expense and travel laid out to no purpose! The voluptuous, or covetous, or ambitious, how do they project, and drudge, and serve their wretched lusts, who when they have done one piece of service, are still to begin another! And what is the profit of all, but shame and sorrow at last? The humble, sober-minded Christian saves all that pains, and hath his heart's desire in quietness and confidence.\* His great desire and delight is, God; and by desiring and delighting, he hath Him. *Psal. xxxvii. 1: Delight thou in the Lord, and He shall give thee thy heart's desire—HIMSELF*; and then, surely, thou shalt have all. Any other thing commit to Him, and He shall bring it to pass.

Strange! men might have God at an easier rate than the poorest vanities they are hunting after, and yet they will not; a full

\* *Vacat temperantia. Sed non habebunt requiem, qui bestiam adorant. SENECA.*

fountain of living waters is ready provided, yet they will be at pains to hew out little cisterns, which, after all their pains, are but *broken cisterns and can hold no water.*

I know not what men are doing, still at work, when they might better sit still, troubling themselves and all about them, and cannot well tell for what. Oh, the sweet peace of believing and obeying God! They truly conquer, sitting still: *Sedendo vincant.* In all times, they are safe under the shadow of the Almighty; are *strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.*

*And ye would not, but said, No.]* Thus men sometimes flatly reject His counsels, and when they are not so gross as plainly to speak it out, yet say so in doing so, and for good manners' sake will blanch it with reproaching the messengers; will have it to be not God's mind, but men's own fancy, a false vision; will own nothing for truth but what suits their humor and design. First, they resolve on their course without acquainting God, ask not His advice; then, when He is pleased to give it by His messengers, they reject it, not under that name, as God's advice, but will not have it pass for this, because it crosses their already-determined course. If it favored that, then, no question, it were welcome enough as His word. That is meant by those words, ver. 10: *Which say to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits.* And so they used Jeremiah long after, in this very point. Jer. xlii. 2. And so they go on to take their own course: *No, but we will flee upon horses.*

And this is the nature of carnal hearts; they are generally inclined to rebel, and take away of their own, casting away the counsels of God, as not suiting with the State, or with wit, or points of honor. They find more feeling and real substance in sensual things than in the promises of God: these seem airy, unsure things to them; therefore, they would still see apparent means, and where these fail, think it but a fancy to rest on God. They dare not trust Him so but as withal to do for themselves, although nothing can be done but what he forbids, which therefore cannot be done without giving up with Him, and departing from their trust on Him. All this cleaves to us, and much cause have we to suspect ourselves, when it is but doubtful that there appears little or no evidence of God's counsel or goodwill to a business, but rather clear characters of His dislike, and much of our own will, a stout, uncontrollable bent to it; when we are conscious to ourselves of this, that either we have not asked advice of God at all, or very slightly, not being much upon our knees with it; or, possibly, in asking His advice, have brought our answer with us, in our own breasts, the lying oracle that making answer, and we consenting to delude ourselves, not hearkening to anything that does not clink and sound to our purpose.

Our hearts are exceedingly deceitful, and particularly in this



point of withdrawing our trust from God and leaving off to follow Him in His ways, to trust on the arm of flesh, on policy and strength, and self-resolved undertakings, rather than on Him without these. Evil men think that those who advise them to trust on God are silly fellows, who know not what belongs to policy and reasons of state. A fancied wisdom it is, that men are enamored with, and look not to a higher wisdom, consider not God, that *He also is wise*. Isa. xxxi. 2. There is, I think, in that word a tart scorn of the folly of their seeming wisdom. Be it that you are wits, yet you will not deny some wisdom to God: *Yet He also is wise*. So they think not on His power neither; therefore He puts them in mind, (v. 3.) that *the Egyptians are men*.

Well, if you be resolved on that course, says God, then, know mine too, that I am resolved upon: *Therefore ye shall flee*, shall have fleeing enough: and if you be *swift*, *they that pursue you shall be swifter*, and one shall serve to chase a thousand, the rebuke the terror of one. This is the condition of the mightiest people and the best appointed armies, when forsaken of God. There is no strength nor courage, nor anything of worth in any of the creatures, but as it is derived from God: it is dependent on Him in the continuance and use of it. *Why are thy valiant men swept away?* *They stood not, because the Lord did drive them*. Jer. xlv. 15. We have seen this, and the turn of it on both sides, how men become a prey to any party, when the terror from God is upon them.

Therefore, learn we to fear Him, to beware of all ways wherein we may justly apprehend Him to be against us. Cleave to Him and to His truth, when it is lowest, and when no human means of help appear, then think you hear Him saying to you, *Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord*.

There is no language of men nor of angels fit to express the graciousness of God's punishments and the threatenings of them; as if they were violently drawn and forced from Him, but mercy, and the sweet promises thereof, naturally flowing from Him. Thus here, He is forced to give up His people to their own counsels, because they will not follow His advices. He entreats them to be quiet, and let Him do for them; but seeing they will not *sit still*, and be safe at His direction, they must run their own course, and fall in it. But it cannot pass so, they must not be quite given over; the Lord hath an interest in them which he will not lose. They must, indeed, for a time eat the fruit of their own ways, and that is not a season to shew them favor; but the Lord will wait a better hope. He is resolved to shew them mercy, and will find His own time for it: *Therefore will He wait, that He may be gracious*.

And this is He moved to, according to His gracious nature, by the greatness of their distress and desolation. Though procured



by themselves, by their great, their inflexible stubbornness, yet He pities to see them so *left as a beacon on the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on a hill. And therefore will the Lord wait.* Thus we have the proper arguings of free mercy, which otherwise, to our narrow thoughts, may seem strange and somewhat inconsequent. Such a *therefore* as this, so unexpectedly changing the strain, doth genuinely and sweetly follow upon the premises, when free love is the medium; that intervening in the midst, makes the sweet turn. Your iniquities prevail to bring you low, and lengthen out your calamities; *therefore*, I will let that have its course, and will stay till my fit time come to do you good. Meanwhile I will lie hid, and be as sitting still; but when that time comes, I will get up and shew myself. *He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you; for the Lord is a God of judgment.* He is wise, and just, and good, and knows His measures of afflicting His people, His times and ways of delivering them, and of bringing destruction on his enemies, and will not slip this season; and it being so, this certainly follows, that they are *blessed that wait on him.*

My hope is in Thee.

We are naturally irregular in our affections and notions, and the only right ordering of them, is, by reducing them to conformity with the ways and thoughts of God, which keep an unalterable, fixed course, as the heavens: the way, I say, to rectify our thoughts is, to set them by His, as clocks and watches, which so readily go wrong, too slow or too fast, are ordered by the sun, which keeps its course. Oh! that we were more careful to set and keep our hearts in attendance on God, winding them up in meditation upon Him, and conforming them in their motions and desires to His disposal in all; for all that concerns us, and for the times of all, being quiet, yea, glad in this, which the Psalmist makes his joy, *My times are in Thy hand, O Lord.* Psal. xxxi. 15. And surely, that is the best. Were I to choose, they should be in no other hands, neither mine own, nor any others. Alas! what silly, poor creatures are we! How little do we know what is fit for us in any kind, and still less what time is fit for any mercy to be bestowed upon us! When He withholds mercies or comforts for a season, it is but till the due season; it is but to ripen them for us, which we in childish hate would pluck green, when they would be neither so sweet nor so wholesome. Therefore it is our wisdom and our peace, to resign all things into His hands, to have no will nor desires, but only this, that we may still *wait for Him.* All shall be well enough, if we but get rid of the vain hopes and expectations of this world. None who indulge them are so well but they are still waiting for somewhat further. Now amidst all

that, our soul may say with David, and speak it to God as known to Him, that it is so indeed : *And now, Lord, what wait I for ? My hope is in Thee. My expectation or waiting, (the same word that is here,) is all placed upon Thee.* Is it so, brethren ? Are our hearts gathered in from other things, to this attendance, while the most about us are gaping for the wind ? Have we laid all up in God, to desire and *wait for Him*, and pretend to nothing beside Him ?

I would do so, may a soul think, but can I hope that He will look on me, and bestow Himself on such a one as I am ? To that I say nothing but, look on His word. If thou thinkest that warrant good enough, here it is for thee, that they are certainly *blessed that wait for Him*. This is assurance enough. Never was any one who *waited for Him*, miserable with disappointment. Whosoever thou art that dost indeed desire Him, and desirest to *wait for Him*, surely thou resolvest to do it in His ways, wherein He is to be found, and wilt not willingly depart from these ; that were foolishly to disappoint thyself, and not to be true to thine own end. Therefore look to that ; do not keep company with any sin. It may surprise thee sometimes as an enemy, but let it not lodge with thee as a friend.

And mind this other thing, prescribe nothing to God. If thou hast begun to wait, faint not, give not up, wait on still. It were good reason, were it but upon little hope at length to find Him : but since it is upon the unfailing assurance, that in the end thou shalt obtain, what folly were it, to lose all for want of waiting a little longer ! See Psal. xl. 1. *In waiting I waited—waited, and better waited—but all was over-paid : He did hear me.* So Psal. cxxx., *I wait and wait until the morning.* These two joined are all, and may well go together, *earnest desire*, and *patient attendance*.

What is that to thee ? Follow thou me.

[A Sermon preached before the Lord Commissioner and the Parliament, 14th November, 1661.]

Of all that ever lived on earth, the most blessed was this handful and small company our Lord chose for his constant attendants, to see his divine miracles, enjoy his sweetest company, and to hear his divine doctrine. What a holy flame of love must have burned in their hearts, who were always so near the Sun of Righteousness ! It was indeed a sad hour, wherein that was eclipsed, and the Lord of life lay dead in the grave. And what a deluge of joy was in their hearts when he rose again ! And what a transport was it when they saw him ascend, and a shining cloud kissing his feet, and parting him from them ! In the interval, as he had risen himself, so, he is raising them from their unbelief. St. Peter, not content with a bare forsaking of his Lord, had also denied him.

But he falls not a quarrelling, but speaks of love to him, and blows up these sparks of love with this threecfold question, *Lovest thou me?* St. Peter answers fervently, but most modestly, whereupon his Lord gives him a service suitable to his love, *Feed my sheep*; for which none are qualified but they that love him. But when he grows bold to ask a question, he gets a grave check, and a holy command, *What is that to thee? Follow thou me.* This was a transient stumbling in one who, but lately recovered of a great disease, did not walk firmly. But it is the common track of most, to wear out their days with impertinent inquiries. There is a natural desire in men to know the things of others, and to neglect their own, and to be more concerned about things to come, than about things present. And this the great subject of conversation. Even the weakest minds must descant upon all things; as if the weakest capacities could judge of the greatest matters, by a strange levelling of understandings, more absurd and irrational than that of fortunes! Most men are beside themselves, never at home, but always roving. It is true, a man may live in solitude to little purpose, as Domitian catching flies in his closet. Many noisome thoughts break in upon one when alone; so that when one converseth with himself, it had need be said, *Vide ut sit cum bono viro.* A man alone shall be in worse company than are in all the world, if he bring not into him better company than himself or all the world, which is, the fellowship of God and the Holy Spirit. Yet, the matters of the Church seem to concern all, and so indeed they do; but every sober man must say, all truths are not alike clear, alike necessary, nor of alike concernment to every one. Christians should keep within their line. Whether it be the will of our Great Master, that the order that hath been so long in the Church continue in it, or not, *What is that to thee?* It is certainly a great error, to let our zeal run out from the excellent things of religion, to matters which have little or no connexion with them. A man, though he err, if he do it calmly and meekly, may be a better man than he who is stormy and furiously orthodox. Our business is to follow JESUS, and to trace his life upon earth, and to wait his return in the clouds. Had I a strong voice, as it is the weakest alive, yea, could I lift it up as a trumpet, I would sound a retreat from our unnatural contentions and irreligious strivings for religion. Oh! what are the things we fight for, compared to the great things of God? There must be a great abatement of the inwards of religion, when it runs wholly to a scurf. God forbid any should think, that except all be according to our mind, we must break the bond of peace. If we have no kindness to our brethren, yet, let us have pity on our mother, and not tear her bowels. And, indeed, next to the grave and the silent shades of death, a cottage in some wilderness is to be wished for, to mourn for the pride and passion of mankind. How do the profane



wretches take advantage from our breaches! But, if there be such here, because of the weakness, folly, and passions of some men, is it folly to follow Jesus? Are some ridiculous, and for that, will you turn religion into ridicule? If you do, it will at least turn to a *Sardonic* laughter. Because we contend for a little, is the whole an invention? Will the pillars be brangled, because of the swarms of flies that are about them?

There is an Eternal Mind that made all things, that stretched out the heavens, and formed the spirit of man within him. Let us tremble before Him, and love the Lord Jesus. Our souls have indelible characters of their own excellency and in them and deep apprehensions of another state, wherein we shall receive according to what we have done upon earth. Was not Jesus, the Son of God, declared to be such by his miracles, but chiefly by his resurrection from the dead? Hath there not been received and transmitted to us, through all ages, many martyrs following him through racks and fires, and their own blood, to his glory? And shall we throw off all these? Better be the poorest, weakest, and most distempered person upon earth, with the true fear of God, than the greatest wit and highest mind in the world, if profane, or, though not such, if void of any just or deep sense of the fear of God, *For a living dog is better than a dead lion*. Some religious persons are, perhaps, weak persons, yet, in all ages, there have been greater nobles and more generous souls truly religious, than ever were in the whole tribe of atheists and libertines.

Let us, therefore follow the holy Jesus. Our own concerns concern us not, compared to this. *What is that to thee?* may be said of all things besides this. All the world is one great impertinency to him who contemplates God and his Son Jesus. Great things, coaches, furniture, or houses, concern the outward pomp or state of the world, but not the necessities of life; neither can they give ease to him that is pinched with any one trouble. He that hath twenty houses, lies but in one at once. He that hath twenty dishes on his table, hath but one belly to fill. So it is, *ad superracua sudatur*. All are uncertain: sudden storms fall on, and riches fly away as a bird to heaven, and leave those who look after them, sinking to hell in sorrow.

A Christian is solicitous about nothing. If he be raised higher, it is that he desires not: if he fall down again, he is where he was. A well-fixed mind, though the world should crack about him, shall be in quiet. But when we come to be stretched on our death-bed, things will have another visage. It will pull the rich from his treasure, strip the great of his robes and glory, and snatch the amorous gallant from his fair, beloved mistress, and from all we either have or grasp at. Only sin will stick fast and follow us. Those black troops will clap fatal arrests on us, and deliver us over to the jailor. Are these contrivances, or the dark dreams of mel-



ancholy? All the sublimities of holiness may be arrived at, by the deep and profound belief of these things. Let us, therefore, ask, Have we walked thus, and dressed our soul by this pattern?

But this hath a nearer aspect to pastors, who should be copies of the fair original, and second patterns, who follow nearer Christ. They should be imitating him in humility, meekness, and contempt of the world, and particularly, in affection to souls, feeding the flock of God. Should we spare labor when he spared not his own blood? How precious must the sheep be, who were bought at so high a rate as the blood of God! Oh, for more of this divine and evangelic heat, instead of our distempered heat. This is the substance of religion, to imitate Him whom we worship. Can there be a higher or nobler design in the world, than to be God-like, and like Jesus Christ? He became like us, that we might be more like Him. He took our nature upon Him that He might transfuse his into us. His life was a track of doing good, and suffering ill. He spent the days in preaching and healing, and often the nights in prayers. He was *holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners*. How then can heirs of wrath follow the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world? Humility, meekness, and charity were the darling virtues of Christ. He came to expiate and to extirpate our pride; and when that Majesty did so humble himself, shall a worm swell? No grace can be where the mind is so swelled with this airy tumor. He was meek, and reviled not again; nor did he vent his anger, though he met with the greatest injuries. The rack of his cross could make him confess no anger against those who were draining him of his life and blood: all he did was to pray for them. Charity was so dear to him, that he recommended it as the characteristic by which all might know his disciples, *if they loved one another*. But alas! by this may all know we are not his disciples, because we hate one another. But that we may imitate him in his life, we must run the back-trade, and begin with his death, and must die without him. Love is a death. He that loves, is gone and lost in God, and can esteem or take pleasure in nothing besides Him. When the bitter cup of the Father's wrath was presented to our Lord, one drop of this elixir of love and union to the Father's will, sweetened it so, that he drank it over without more complaining. This death of Jesus mystically acted in us, must strike down all things else, and he must become our all. Oh, that we would resolve to live to Him that died, and to be only His, and humbly to follow the crucified Jesus! All else will be quickly gone. How soon will the shadows that now amuse us, and please our eyes, fly away!

My Son, give me thy Heart.

He accounts not nor accepts of anything we can offer Him, if we give not the heart with it; and He will have none of tha

neither, unless He have it all. And it is a poor all, when we have given it, for the great God to accept of. If one of us had the affection of a hundred, yea, of all the men in the world, yet could he not love God in a measure answerable to His full worth and goodness. All the glorified spirits, angels, and men, that are or shall be, in their perfections, loving Him with the utmost extent of their souls, do not altogether make up so much love as He deserves. Yet He is pleased to require our heart, and the love we have to bestow on Him; and though it is infinitely due of debt, yet He will take it as a gift: *My son give me thy heart.* Prov. xxiii. 26.

Therefore, the soul that begins to offer itself to Him, although overwhelmed with the sense of its own unworthiness and the meanness of its love, yet may say, Lord, I am ashamed of this gift I bring Thee, yet, because Thou callest for it, such as it is, here it is; the heart and all the love I have, I offer unto Thee, and had I ten thousand times more, it should all be Thine. As much as I can, I love Thee, and I desire to be able to love Thee more. Although I am unworthy to be admitted to love, yet, thou art most worthy to be loved by me, and besides, Thou dost allow, yea, commandest me to love Thee. My loving of Thee adds nothing to Thee, but it makes me happy; and though it be true, the love and the heart I offer Thee is infinitely too little for Thee, yet there is nothing besides Thee, enough for it.

In their affliction they will seek me early.

It had been early, in a wiser sense, to have sought to Him for a reconciliation before the affliction; but here it expresses a most diligent seeking, according to the original word: for things that men are earnest upon, they will be early stirring to set about. For besides that it is a certain prophecy of what was to come to pass in this people, it hath in it this general truth, with which it agrees; to wit, the moral fitness of great affliction to work this diligent seeking of God, before neglected, and acknowledgment of sin before unfelt: which is expressed in the former clause. Together with seeking His face, there must be the sense and acknowledgment of sin. There is no returning to Him, but from it. In following sin, we depart from God, and by forsaking it, we return to Him. These are inseparable; they are but one motion. It was their sin made Him leave them, and go to His place; and therefore it were in vain to seek Him, retaining it, for that would drive Him further from them.

Now affliction is apt to bring men to this; such, I mean, as have any knowledge of God. Although they be not converted, yet, it works them to a temporary fit of returning and seeking God, such as they are capable of. And those make up the greatest

part in the public humblings of a nation, or any multitude of people, having most of them no more heat of devotion and desire of God, than the fit of present affliction works; and therefore, when that ceases, they have done likewise with their repentance and regard of God. Being stirred only by that outward principle, they act no longer that way, than while they are acted by it. Water will be very hot, yea, boil and make a noise, when it is upon the fire; but set it off, and it returns within a while, to its natural coldness. Thus it was often with the same people, See Psalm lxxviii. And there are still daily too many instances of it. Yet the Lord, to shew how much regard He hath to repentance, lets not the very semblance of it go to loss. He is pleased, for the repressing of sin, and the purging of His Church of gross and scandalous profaneness, to make use of public afflictions to work in many even this kind of repentance, and to answer this repentance with removal of the affliction that wrought it. With God's own children, this method holds in a way peculiar to them. They may, indeed, as well as others, sometimes stand in need of the rod for their bettering, and it may work it, but there is this difference; their grief for sin, and seeking after God, do not wholly depend on the lash; they are constant in these things, as having a living principle within them; whence they shew in all estates, that sin is to them the greatest grief, and the favor of God the greatest good.

#### The Hiding of God's Face.

It is true, that the outward distresses of the Church and people of God are sometimes expressed by the hiding of His face from them, and so it is a part of what he means here; but it is not all the sense of it any where, but it is a word of their affliction, carrying a reflection upon their sin that provoked the Lord to afflict them, and so, implies His just anger kindled by these provocations. And it hath usually the ingredients of spiritual judgments under it, either the depriving them of God's ordinances in their use, or of the power and efficacy of them, (as was at this time, we see, the Prophet's complaint,) and possibly, a great measure of that heavy judgment upon the people, of blindness of mind and hardness of heart, a stupid senselessness under their calamities, which is one of the most certain and the saddest signs of their continuance. And this is the Prophet's meaning in this place. For without these, or something like them, a church may be in real affliction, and yet, not under the eclipse of God's face for all that. Yea, possibly it may shine clearer on the Church in a time of outward trouble, than in the midst of peaceable and prosperous days: as the moon, when it is dark towards the earth, then the half that is towards heaven is all luminous, and, on the contrary,



when it is the full to our view, it is dark heavenward. We see it in the common instance of the primitive times, how the gold shined in the furnace, how holiness and purity of religion flourished and spread in the midst of persecutions, and zeal for God burnt brighter than the fires that were kindled against it, and triumphed over them; and soon after they were put out, how it began to cool and abate, and the purity of religion insensibly died into numbers of superstitious and gaudy devices; and the Church grew downwards, outwardly more pompous, but lost as much for that of integrity of doctrine and worship. And therefore, in the twelfth chapter of Revelations, there is a woman *clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet*, as full of heavenly ornaments as she is destitute of, and withal despises, those of the earth. And look, again, to the eighteenth chapter, and see a woman clothed in purple, and decked with gold and precious stones, and a golden cup in her hand, but herself, under all these dressings, *a harlot*, and her golden cup full of abominable filthiness. So, then, doubtless, the hiding of God's face from His Church, is something beyond her outward lowness and affliction, and greater and heavier than that; the withdrawing of His presence, and His not appearing for their deliverance out of trouble, and their spiritual comfort and benefit under it.

1st. Now, as that is put for the top of all distresses, we should esteem it so. But in reference to ourselves, and to the Church of God, I am afraid a great part of us do not know what it is to have this light. If we did, there needed no more urging it: itself would persuade us enough to prize it, and to fear the loss of it. The soul that knows the sweetness of His presence and His face shining on it, will account no place nor condition hard, providing it may be refreshed with that: as the saints have been in caves and dungeons enjoying more of that light in those times, when other comforts have been abridged. Then they have had a beam from Heaven into their souls in their darkest dungeon, far more worth than the light of the sun and all the advantages the world can afford. That Rabbin who lived twelve years in a dungeon in Francis's time, called a book he wrote, *The Polar Splendor*; implying that he had then seen most intellectual light when he had seen least sensible light. And thus it is with many Christians, in the darkness of distress: if they seek after this light, they may blame themselves and their own neglect if they find not somewhat of this truth. On the other hand, to a spiritual mind, this hiding of God's face will damp and distress the pleasantest outward condition which can be allotted him. It was in the midst of David's prosperity, enough to unseason all: *'Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled.* Psal. xxx. 7.

Now, if we would have the Lord, to whom believing souls are married in truth and righteousness, to look pleasantly on us, our



great ambition should be, to walk in all well pleasing unto Him, and to seek of Himself those ornaments and that spiritual beauty which may make us lovely in his eyes; as a faithful wife decked herself only for her husband. For all these inferior things are but figures of that mysterious life of grace which the soul hath from God, and by which it lives in Him. There are some singular largesses and outlets of spiritual joy which God gives not to every Christian, nor to any at all times. These we speak not of. But if we would enjoy more abiding influences of His love, and find Him accepting of our services at our hands, and measuring His graces to us, coming to us, and giving us access to come to Him, putting a life and blessing into His ordinances, though with different degrees at divers times: then our care should be, to entertain this friendship and correspondence diligently, to watch over our hearts and ways, that we may admit of nothing that may disturb or interrupt it, and to be jealous of the least abatement; to search and find out the cause of it without delay. And if we do thus, we shall undoubtedly find the Lord willing to converse and dwell with us; and though He give us lower measures of comfort and graces than others get, they shall be so much as will enable us to go on in our journey. Above all, study humility. The High Lord loves to give Himself and His society most to the lowly heart. Trust not at all to thyself, nor to anything below Him. Lay all thy confidence upon His power and goodness. Ye see here, that it was the multitude of sins that eclipsed His face from His own people, *the house of Jacob*; as He tells them by this Prophet, chap. lix. 1. It was particularly their distrust of God, and running to other helps beside Him. Ever, the more he is in thy esteem, the more thou shalt have of Him; and the more thou believest His all-sufficiency, the more thou shalt find it and know it in thine own experience. Yea, it may be that when His face is hid from the Church, in respect of public distress and desertion, yet, it may even then shine bright upon a soul that secretly cleaveth to Him and delights in Him. So here, the Prophet says not that He hides His face from *me*, but, *from the House of Jacob*.

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The two wheels of the soul are, desire and hope. Difficulty sets an edge upon desire; and the appearance of obtaining upholds hope. And both these are in the words the prophet here uses for his waiting and expecting; for they import an earnest desire, and yet a patient attending upon the issue. Look to that of David, Psal. cxxx. 6: *I wait for Thee, more than they that wait for the morning*,—that watch until the morning, as some render it; in the cold night that watch. The thing the pilot waits for, is not a private good to himself, for that could not stand a counterbalance to the evil he is sensible of. The Lord's hiding

His face from the house of Jacob, was that which troubled him, and his waiting was answerable, for the return of that light to the house of Jacob. Grieved that the Lord should absent Himself from His people, he looks back upon God's frequent appearances and shewing of His face to Jacob, by such visions as gave lustre and glory to the place. See Hosea xii. 9. *We found Him in Bethel, there He spake with us*,—even us who have interest in these gracious appearances. And there it is urged for a ground of hope and waiting and calling on God. Now, for the face of God to be hid from those who were the posterity of Jacob and God's own peculiar people, was a sad thought to the prophet, who stays himself with this, that the Lord God had made known to him His purpose of returning and restoring the house of Jacob, and upon this he resolves to believe, and to rely upon God's word for it: *I will wait*.

Hoping, waiting, and believing, are taken indifferently in the Scriptures, and all the difference is only in relation to time. Faith believes the present word, and hope looks out for the after-accomplishment; and the patient waiting for it, results from both. So they are but the actings of the same faith in a different notion, and they are indeed the test of faith. Our hearts are naturally of another temper than to take the Lord's word and repose upon it, and, when it is deferred, yea, and cross appearances come in betwixt, yet, still firmly to believe and patiently to wait for the accomplishment. We are of a childish humor. That which we laugh at in children, in little things, such as their minds are set on, we may be sorry for in ourselves as a greater folly, being in greater affairs. We are all in haste, and would have things come as fast as our fancying; and upon the delay of these mercies we look for, are almost ready to give over. That which brake forth from that wicked king's mouth, the seed of it is in all our hearts, when things appear worse and worse: *This evil is from the Lord; why should I wait for him any longer?* 2 Kings vi. 23. It is strange, in court suits and other business of a like nature, how long a man will wait upon another, and think all is well if he speed at last; and yet, how briskly we deal with God if He answers not at the first!

But faith teaches us (so to speak) spiritual civility, good manners towards God; it lets the soul see His greatness, and goodness, and truth, and persuades us to wait on him, and not to weary in waiting; *to wait patiently*, as it is Psal. xl. 1. Faith composes the mind, cures that light, fickle hastiness which is naturally in us. *He that believeth shall not make haste*, says the same Prophet, Isa. xxviii. 16. And is it not good reason that we wait for Him? Is He not wise enough to choose the fittest times for His own purposes? Well may we wait till He be gracious to us, for He *waits to be gracious* to us. Isa. xxx. 18. He is not slack, but

is staying only for the due season; His love is waiting for the time that His wisdom hath appointed. And, to express His affection in our terms, He is longing for that time, as well as we are. For the same word is there used for *His* waiting, that both here and in that verse is used for *ours*, and it signifies an earnest waiting or breathing for that thing we wait for; and, therefore, since He waits and longs, our waiting is in a happy conformity to Him. And thus, with good reason it is concluded, *They are blessed that wait for him*. Thus there is a word very answerable, Hab. ii. 3: *The vision is for an appointed time,—we read, At the end it shall speak*, but it may be rendered,—*It breatheth towards the end*; runs, as it were, so fast that it panteth. The same word is used, Cant. ii., for the rising of the morning.

By fretting impatience, there is nothing gained but needless desire. It advances not our business, but perplexes us to no purpose. And, on the other hand, patient waiting loses not a moment, but attains its end in the very due time determined; and hath this advantage in the mean time, that it puts the mind into a temper of peace and contentedness, which a man may act and profess to others, but cannot truly have within himself without faith. Isa. xvi. 3: *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee*. This waiting is always answered; never marked with disappointment, as is the ordinary custom of other hopes. Therefore, that which the Prophet hath, *He that believeth shall not make haste*, the Apostle Peter renders, *shall not be ashamed*, 1 Pet. ii. 6. Though he hasten not, but wait, and wait long, yet, his waiting shall not shame him; none shall have matter to laugh at him for it, for his waiting shall be repaid with success, his hope shall be accomplished. Whereas, any other expectations make men ridiculous, and expose them to scorn, in that they look often for most contentment in those things that deceive them. The brooks that grow dry in summer, are an emblem of worldly hopes. Thus, Job. vi. 19: *The troops of Tema looked, the companies of Sheba waited for them. They were confounded because they had hoped; they came thither and were ashamed*. But this waiting on the Lord, never yet deluded any. *I waited patiently for the Lord*, says the Psalmist, *and He inclined to me, and heard my cry*. Psal. xl. 1. Then he makes his experience a common good; draws it to a general conclusion, v. 4: *Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust*.

#### The Fear of Death.

*It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after that to come to judgment*, saith the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Two sad necessities to sinful man. This last, nature's light discovers



not; but the other, though it be seldom deep in our thoughts, is almost always before our eyes; and though few seriously remember it, yet none can be ignorant of it. Against this known and universal evil, the chief of heathen moralists, the stoics, have much endeavored to arm themselves. And others have bent the strength of their wits to master the fear of death, and have made themselves, and some of their hearers, conquerors in imagination: but when the king of terrors really appeared, he dashed their stout resolutions, and turned all their big words and looks into appalment.

And the truth is, there are no reasonings in the world able to argue a man into a willingness to part with a present being, without some hopes, at least, of one more happy; nor will any contentedly dislodge, though they dwell never so meanly, except upon terms of changing for the better.

The Christian, then, (not the nominal Christian, but he who is truly such,) is the only man that can look death immediately in the face; for he knows assuredly that he shall remove to *a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

#### Duties of Ministers.

#### 1. Piety. 2. Prudence. 3. Fidelity. 4. Magnanimity.

*Piety*, in two steps or degrees: first, to look they be friends with God; secondly, to labor to be inward with Him.

[1.] They are to look that they be friends with God. For it no way suits that they be ambassadors for reconciliation, who are not themselves reconciled; it is certain, such will move both coldly and successlessly in the work. What He can do extraordinarily who doth always what He wills in heaven and earth, we question not. He can convey grace by those to whom He gives none. He can cause them to carry this treasure, and have no share in it; carry the letter and not know what is in it; and make them, so to speak, equivocal causes of conversion.

But, usually, He *converts* those whom He makes the happy *strengtheners of their brethren*, Luke xxii. 32. We think, that they who savingly know not Christ, should not be fit to make other men acquainted with him. He who can tell men what God has done for his soul, is the likeliest to bring their souls to God. Hardly can he speak to the heart, who speaks not from it. *Si vis me flere*, &c. Before the cock crows to others, he claps his wings, and rouses up himself. How can a frozen-hearted creature warm his hearers' hearts, and enkindle them with the love of God? But he whom the love of Christ constrains, his lively recommendations of Christ, and speeches of love, shall sweetly constrain others to love him. Above all loves, it is most true of this, that none can speak sensibly of it, but they that have felt it. Our most requisite pulpit-orators, yea, speak they with the tongues



of men and angels, without the experience of this love, are no fit ambassadors for Christ, for his embassy is a love-treaty. Such men are but sounding brass, and tinkling cymbals. The sublimest and best contrived of their discourses, glow-worm like, or as those foolish fires, may have some light with them, heat they have none. When a man speaks of reconciliation and happiness, as if he had some interest therein himself, when his words are animated with affection, as he is like to beget some affection where there is none, so, a pious hearer that is already gained to Christ, finds the embassy drawing him effectually nearer Heaven : blowing that Divine fire that is within him, and causing it to mount upwards. *As in water, face answereth to face, so doth the heart of man to man*, saith the wise man, Prov. xxvii. 19. There is a certain peculiar sympathy and sweet correspondence betwixt souls that lodge the same spirit. Those that are united to the same Head, Christ, by reconciliation, find their hearts agreed, and they relish the discourses one of another. Thus important is it every way, both for the begetting and for the strengthening of grace, that the ambassador thereof be a reconciled person.

[2.] As he must look that he be friends with God, so, secondly, he must labor also to be inward with God. For though the embassy be the same, in great part, in the mouths of all God's ambassadors, yet, there is a world of mysterious particulars contained in it, and they meet with many intricate pieces in their particular treaties with men's consciences. And in these, know they the will of the king, their master, more or less clearly, according as they are more or less intimate with Him. How knew divine Moses so much of the Lord's will, but by much converse with Him ?

These ambassadors, to the end that they may do so, must labor for integrity. His *secret* is with the righteous. For humility. He is familiar indeed with the lowly ; He takes up house with them : *With such a one will I dwell*, saith the Lord. God's choice acquaintance are humble men. For the spirit of meekness. He whom we named was eminent in this, and so, in familiarity with God. Christ singularly loves the meek and lowly, they are so like himself. One thing they must mainly take heed of, if they aspire to a holy familiarity with God ; earthly-mindedness. If no servant of the god of mammon can serve this God in point of common service, how much less can he be fit for an eminent employment, as an embassy, and enjoy the intimacy requisite for that employment ? These messengers should come near the life of angels, *always beholding the face of the Father of lights*. But if their affections be engaged to the world, their faces will still be that way. Fly high they may, sometimes, in some speculations of their own ; but, like the eagle, for all their soaring, their eye will still be upon some prey, some carrion here

below. Upright, meek, humble, and heavenly minds, then, must the ambassadors of this great King have, and so obtain His intimacy, mounting upon those wings of prayer and meditation, and having the eye of faith upwards. Thus shall they learn more of His choice mysteries in one hour, than by many days poring upon casuists and schoolmen, and such like. This ought to be done, I confess; but above all, the other must not be omitted. Their chief study should be, that of their commission, the holy Scriptures. The way to speak skilfully from God, is often to hear Him speak. *The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned;* saith the evangelic prophet, (chiefly intending Christ,) *to speak a word in season to the weary.* Ay, that is the learnedest tongue when all is done. But how?—*He wakeneth me morning by morning; he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.* Isa. l. 4.

Thus we see how these ambassadors have need to be friends, and intimate friends with their Lord. For if they be much with God in the mount, their returns to men will be with brightness in their faces, and the law in their hand; their lives and their doctrines shall be heavenly.

2. The second requisite of these ambassadors is, *Prudence*, or dexterity to manage their Master's business. Wise princes and states, in choosing their ambassadors, above all other kinds of learning, have respect to practical abilities; and they that can best read the several geniuses and dispositions of several nations and particular men, and accordingly know how to treat with every one according to their temper, to speak to them in their own language, are judged the fittest men for that employment. Great is the diversity of humors among men: some are timorous, some rash, some avaricious, some ambitious, some slow and leaden, others precipitant and mercurial, and many other varieties. Now, to know how to deal with each of these in their own kind, for the advancement of his master's business, is a special discretion in an ambassador. And those ambassadors we speak of, had as much need of it as any: they have men of all, both outward and inward differences, to deal with, and the same men so different from themselves at divers times, that they are hardly the same; some ignorant, others learned, some weak, others strong, some secure with false presumptions, others tormented with false fears. And much prudent consideration of those differences, and accommodating themselves thereunto in the matter and manner of their discourses, is very expedient in their treaties. *Of some have compassion, plucking them out of the fire, making a difference.* Jude xxii. What other is St. Paul's *becoming all things to all men, that he might win some?* 1 Cor. ix. 22. And this policy is far different from temporising, and compliance with evil, which in no case can be tolerated in these ambassadors, for that is disadvantageous to their business: it may be the way of their own pro-

motion, but it is not the way to advance their Master's kingdom, which end should be the square of all their contrivances, and with it nothing will suit but what is upright. A kind of guile they may use, but it must carry their King's impress ; it must be a holy guile ; and such, the ministers of the Gospel not only may, but ought to study. Fishers of men they are, and why may they not use certain baits, and diversity of them ? But as their catching is not destructive, but saving, so must all their baits be. They must quarter dove-like simplicity and serpentine wisdom together, as he commanded them, who sent them on this embassy.

3. Their third duty is *Fidelity* ; and that both in the matter of their embassy, and in the manner of delivering it. In the matter they must look to their commission, and declare the whole counsel of God, not adding nor abating anything. We know how heinously kings take the presumption of their ambassadors in this kind ; though reason be pretended, and perhaps justly, yet, even they account obedience better than sacrifice : yea, some of them have been so precise and tender of their prerogative, that they have preferred a damageable affront to their commands, before a profitable breach of them. And above all kings, this King who is above them all, hath good reason to be punctual in this ; for princes instructions may be imperfect, and as things may fall out, prejudicial to their purpose, but His are most complete, and always so suitable to His end, that they cannot be bettered. The matter, then, of this embassy is unalterable : in that, these ambassadors must be faithful. Faithful, also, in the manner of delivering it ; with singleness and diligence. [1.] With *singleness*, free from by-respects, not seeking their own honor or advantage, but their Master's ; abasing themselves where need is, that he may be magnified ; never hazarding the least part of His rights for the greatest benefit that could accrue to themselves. The treachery of an ambassador is of all the most intolerable ;—to deceive under trust. If any who bear the name of God's legates, think to deceive Him, they deceive themselves ; He cannot be mocked. They must all appear before His judgment seat, and be unveiled before men and angels. Knowing, therefore, *the terrors of the Lord*, let them go about His work with candor and singleness of heart. And [2.] with *diligence*. *He that is diligent in his work, shall stand before princes*, saith the wise prince. Prov. xxii. 29. The great Prince of Peace shall admit those to stand eminently before him, who are diligent in his embassy of peace. Such are they who make it their meat and their drink, as Christ himself did, who accept all occasions, yea, seek and make occasions, to treat with men for God. That oracle-like preaching of one sermon or two in a year, is far from this sedulity and instancy in treating, which are requisite in God's ambassadors. The prince of darkness hath more industrious agents than so :



they compass sea and land to make a proselyte; they hold to it, and are content to lose many a labor, that some one may prosper.

And this may meet with the discontent that some ministers take at their great pains and little success. We see, Satan's ministers can comport with this. Since it is no just exception against God's work, still be in thy business, and refer the issue to thy Master. *Wait on God, and do good*, saith the royal Psalmist. Psalm xxxvii. 3. *Sow thy seed in the morning, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not which will prosper*, saith the wise son. Eccl. xi. 6. As the moralist speaks of benefits, a man must lose many words among the people, that some one may not be lost. *I am all things to all*, saith our Apostle, *that I may gain some*. 1 Cor. ix. 20. And though in continuing diligent, thy diligence should still continue fruitless to others, to thee it shall not be so. Thy God is a discreet Lord: as He hath not put events into thy hand, He will not exact them at thy hands. Thou art to be accountable for planting and watering, but not for the increase. Be not wanting in thy task, and thou shalt not want thy recompense. Shouldest thou be forced to say with the Prophet, *I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for nought*, in regard of success, yet, if thou hast labored, so labored as to spend thy strength in that service, thou must add with him, *Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God*. Isa. xlix. 4.

4. The last duty recommendable to these ambassadors, is *Maganimity*, which is no less needful than the preceding. Many a difficulty and discouragement is to be encountered in this service, and, which is worse, some temptations of prosperity and advancement. If you persist to plead freely for your Master, you shall be the very mark of the world's enmity. What mischief is there, that Christ hath not foretold his disciples to expect at their hands? For Christ circumvents no man to his service; he tells them what they shall meet with: *They shall persecute you through their courts, ecclesiastical and civil; deliver you up to councils, and scourge you in their synagogues, and accuse before governors and kings*; (Matt. x. 17.) yea, *they shall think they do God good service when they kill you*. His own ambassadors. Many mountains are to be climbed in going this embassy, and the rage of many a tempest to be endured. *His animi opus est, et pectore firmo*. Courage, then, ambassadors of the Most High! See if you can rise above the world, and tread upon her frownings with the one foot, and her deceitful smilings with the other. Slight her profers, and condemn likewise her contempts. There is honor enough in the employment, to cause you to answer all oppositions with disdain. Let it be as impossible to turn you aside from your integrity, as the sun from its course. For that message which you carry, shall be glorious in the end: it shall conquer all opposite



powers. When you seem exposed in your voyage to the fury of winds and waves, remember what you carry. *Casarem vehis, et fortunam ejus*, as he said; it cannot suffer shipwreck. Let no sufferings dismay you. For a generous ambassador will always account it far more honorable to suffer the worst things for doing the best service he can to his master, than to enjoy the world's best rewards for the least point of disloyalty. And if ever Master was worthy the suffering for, yours is. Happy are you when they persecute you for his sake, as himself hath told, Matt. v. 10. There are honorable examples to look back to—*No persecuted they the prophets*; and a precious recompense to look forward to—*Great is your reward in heaven*. Our blessed Redeemer refused no hardships for the working out of this peace, which is your embassy. He knew what entertainment did abide him in the world, what contempts would be put upon him by mankind which he came to redeem; he knew of the full cup of his Father's wrath, that he was to drink for them; yet, resolution arising from love, climbed over all these mountains, and happily conquering all these difficulties, attained the desired end. Worthy ambassadors, follow this generous Leader in promulgating the peace he hath purchased. Tread his steps who *endured the cross and despised the shame*, and your journey's end shall be suitable to his who *is set down at the right hand of the Father*. Heb. xii. 2. Well did St. Paul study this copy when he said, *I know that bonds abide me every where; but I care for none of these things, so that I may finish my course with joy*. Acts xx. 24. The looking over to that great end, is the great means of surmounting the hardest things that intervene. The eyeing of that much, will make an undaunted ambassador. And that this lesson of courage is very pertinent for them, will appear by Christ's own urging it upon the first legates he sent out, when he dwelt here below: *Fear not*, saith he, *them that can kill the body, &c.* Matt. x. 28; where, methinks, he propounds, as the chief incentive of courage to these ambassadors, the joint consideration of those to whom they are sent, and of Him who sends them. For, seriously considered, it must needs be found most incongruous, that ambassadors of God should be afraid to speak to men. Fear not them; the utmost they can do, reacheth no further than the tabernacles of clay. Nor can they touch that without permission: not a hair of their head falls without notice of their Master. But suppose the highest, let them kill the body; thither goes their rage and no further. *But fear Him who can kill both body and soul*. Fear not, but fear. As this fear hath better cause, so it is the only expelling cause of the other fear. Nothing begets so generous and undaunted spirits as the fear of God: no other fear, none of those base ones that torment worldly men, dare claim room where that fear lodgeth. The only cause of these legates' fears is the inconsideration of their Master.

Would they remember him much, it would ennoble their spirits to encounter the hardest evils of life, and death itself, courageously in his service. Their reward is preserved for them, and they for it; yea, it alone puts them into full possession. For their Master, beyond all kings, hath this privilege: he can not only restore life lost in his service, but, for a life subject to death, yea, a dying life, can give immortality, and, for their sufferings, light and momentary, an eternal weight of glory. Let them be impoverished in his service, it is the best bargain in the world to lose all for him. Let them be scourged and stigmatized for the ignominy of these sufferings, the spirit of glory shall rest upon them. If that Persian prince could so prize his Zopyrus, who was mangled for his service, how much more will this Lord esteem those who suffer so for him! He is the tenderest King over his servants in the world. Those who touch them, touch the apple of his eye. Let his messengers, then, despise the worst the world can do against them; yea, let them say of death, as he said of it to his adversaries, Anytus and Melitus, *Kill me they may, but they cannot hurt me.*

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## SELECTIONS FROM THE EXPOSITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

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### Be much in Prayer.

If you would be rich in all grace, be much in prayer. Con-  
versing with God assimilates the soul to Him, beautifies it with the  
beams of His holiness, as Moses's face shined when he returned  
from the mount. It is prayer, that brings all our supplies from  
Heaven; as the virtuous woman is said, Prov. xxxi. 14, *to be like  
the merchant's ships, she bringeth her food from afar.* Prayer  
draws more grace out of God's hand, and subdues sin and the  
powers of darkness; it entertains and augments our friendship  
with God, raiseth the soul from earth, and purifies it wonderfully.  
Their experience, who have any of this kind, teacheth them, that,  
as they abate in prayer, all their graces do sensibly weaken. There-  
fore, when the Apostle hath suited a Christian with his *whole Ar-  
mor*, he adds this to all, *Praying always with all prayer and sup-  
plication in the Spirit.* Eph. vi. 18. For this arms man and his  
armor both, with the strength and protection of God.

## Forms of Prayer.

As for prescribing forms of prayer in general, to be bound to their continual use in private or in public, is no where practised. Nor is there, I conceive, on the other side, any thing in the word of God, or any solid reason drawn from the word, to condemn their use.

There is, indeed, that inconvenience observable in their much use, and leaning on them, that they easily turn to coldness and formality; and yet, to speak the truth of this, it is rather imputable to our dullness and want of affection in spiritual things, than to the forms of prayer that are used. For whereas some may account it much spiritualness, to despise what they have heard before, and to desire continual variety in prayer, it seems rather to be want of spiritualness that makes that needful, for that we find not our affections lively in that holy exercise, unless they be awakened and stirred by new expressions: whereas the soul that is earnest on the thing itself for itself, panting after the grace of God and the pardon of sin, regards not in what terms it be uttered, whether new or old; yea, though it be in those words it hath heard and uttered a hundred times, yet, still it is new to a spiritual mind. And surely, the desires that do move in that constant way, have more evidence of sincerity and true vigor in them, than those that depend upon new notions and words to move them, and cannot stir without them. It may be, it is no other than a false flash of temporary devotion that arises in a man's heart, which comes by the power of some moving strain of prayer that is new. But when confessions of sin, and requests of pardon, though in never so low and accustomed terms, carry his heart along with them Heavenwards, it is then more sure, that the Spirit of God dwelling in him, and the sense of the things themselves, the esteem of the blood of Christ and the favor of God, do move the heart, and there is no novelty of words to help it. So then, though the Lord bestows rich gifts upon some of His servants, for His own glory and the good of His Church, yet we should beware, that in fancying continual variety in prayer, there be not more of the flesh than of the spirit, and the head working more than the heart. It is remarkable, that, as they that search those things observe, the words of this prayer are (divers of them) such as come near the words of such petitions as were usual among the Jews, though He in whom was all fullness and wisdom, was not scarce of matter and words; so little was novelty and variety considerable in prayer, in his esteem. Mistake it not; the Spirit of prayer hath not his seat in the invention, but in the affection. In this, many deceive themselves, in that they think the work of this Spirit of prayer to be mainly in furnishing new supplies of thoughts and words: no, it is mainly in exciting the heart anew at times of prayer, to break

forth itself in ardent desires to God, whatsoever the words be, whether new or old, yea, possibly without words; and then most powerful when it words it least, but vents in sighs and groans that cannot be expressed. Our Lord understands the language of these perfectly, and likes it best: He knows and approves the meaning of His own Spirit, and looks not to the outward appearance, the shell of words, as men do. Rom. viii. 26, 27.

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But is, then, all length and much continuance in prayer, and all redoubling of the same request, reprobable? Surely not. Were there nothing else to persuade us of this, our Saviour's own practice were sufficient, who prescribed this rule, and yet is found to have spent whole nights in prayer, and to have iterated the same request; and doubtless, (which can be said of no other,) his example is as perfect a rule as his doctrine.

This, then, briefly, is the fault here: when the long continuance and much repetition in prayer, is affected as a thing of itself available; when heaping on words, and beating often over the same words, though the heart bear them not company, is judged to be prayer; and generally, whensoever the tongue outruns the affection, then is prayer turned into babbling. Yea, though a man use this very short form here prescribed, yet he may commit this very fault against which it was provided, he may babble in saying it; and it is to be feared, the greatest part do so. Men judge, and that rightly, a speech to be long or short, not so much by the quantity of words, as by the sense; so that a very short speech that is empty of sense, may be called long, and a long one that is full, and hath nothing impertinent, is truly short: thus, as men judge by the sense of speech, God judgeth by the affection of prayer, which is the true sense of it; so, the quality is the rule of the quantity with Him. There is no prayer too long to Him, provided it be all enlivened with affection: no idle repetition, where the heart says every word over again as often, and more often than the tongue. Therefore, those repetitions in the Psalms, *Lord, hear, Lord, incline Thine ear, Lord attend, &c.*, were not idle on this account; God's own Spirit did dictate them, there was not one of them empty, but came from the heart of the holy penmen, full fraught with the vehemency of their affection. And it is reported of St. Augustine, that he prayed over for a whole night, *Noverim te, Domine, noverim me*: because his heart still followed the suit, all of it was prayer. So that in truth, where the matter is new, and the words still diverse and very rich in sense, yet, with God, it may be idle multiplying of words, because the heart stays behind; and where the same words are repeated, so that a man seems poor and mean in the gift of prayer to others, yet, if it be not defect of affection, but the abundance of it, as it may be, that moves often the same request, it is not empty, but



full of that sense that the Searcher of hearts alone can read. I had rather share with that *publican* in his own words, and say it often over, as if I had nothing else to say, *God be merciful to me a sinner*, saying it with such a heart, than the most excellent prayer where the outside is the better half.

So, then, this is the mistake of men, to think to make words pass for prayer with God, and to make up what is wanting inwardly, with multitude of words and long continuance: a foolish compensation, that will no way satisfy Him who says, Above all, *my son, give me thy heart*; and no length nor words can supply the want of that with Him. Yet, many do thus; they give large measure of that which is altogether worth nothing. As the orator said of those that make a poor speech pass for something, by crying it out with a loud voice, *that they were like to those cripples who got a horseback to hide their halting*; it is thus here. And the Church of Rome hath it for their common shift; they have shut out the heart out of this employment, where it hath most interest, by praying in an unknown tongue; and this defect they make up with long continuance, and repetition of *pater-nosters*, with a devotion as cold and dead as the beads they drop. And so they with their breviaries, notwithstanding their name, fall directly into this foolish, heathenish vanity of idle length and repetitions.

Thus do we too, though we speak our own known language, when either in secret or in public we suffer our hearts to rove in prayer, and hear not ourselves what we are praying: how then can we expect that God should hear us?

If the affection can be brought to continue in it, prayer in secret cannot be too long. But let us not think it virtue enough that it is long; let it rather be brief with strong bent of mind, than long without it; as a small body strong and full of spirits, is much better than the greatest bulk that is dull and spiritless. And when we pray in company, because men cannot know the temper of other men's hearts, usually a convenient medium betwixt the extremes of briefness and length, seems most suitable.

But, alas! how few be there who keep constant watch over their affections in prayer, and endeavor to keep the heart bent to it throughout! Oh, how much sin is committed by us this way that we observe not!

#### Selfish Prayer.

He that in prayer minds none but himself, doubtless he is not right in minding himself. Howsoever, this he may be sure of, that in keeping out others from his prayers, he bars himself from the benefit of all others' prayers likewise. *Si pro te solo oras, pro te solus oras*: If thou prayest for thyself alone, thou alone prayest for thyself, says St. Ambrose. So that self-love itself may

here plead for love to our brethren. Forget not the Church of God, and to seek the good of Zion, it is not only your duty, but your benefit. Are you not all concerned in it, if indeed you be parts of that mystical body? And it hinders not at all, but rather advances your personal suits at God's hands, when He sees your love to your brethren, and desires for the Church's good. Let not, therefore, any estate, no private perplexity or distress, nor very sorrow for sin, take you so up, as to be all for yourselves: let others, but especially the public condition of the Church of God, find room with you. We find it thus with David; when he was lamenting his own case, Psal. li. 18, and Psal. xxv. ult., and elsewhere, yet, he forgets not the Church: *In Thy good pleasure do good to Zion, and build up the walls of Jerusalem.* So then, let this be the constant tenor of your prayers, even in secret. When thou prayest alone, *shut thy door*, says our Saviour here, shut out as much as thou canst the sight and notice of others, but shut not out the interest and good of others; say *Our Father*.

Hallowed be Thy Name.

More particularly and distinctly, the sanctifying of God's name hath in it these things. [1.] To have right thoughts of the holiness and majesty of God. [2.] That, upon so conceiving of Him, our hearts be reverently affected towards Him. [3.] Not only to have that due apprehension and reverence of His holiness in the habit, and so let it lie dead within us, but often to stir up ourselves to the remembrance and consideration of it, to call in our thoughts to act about it: so, this will increase our knowledge and reverence, (as all habits grow by acting,) and will excite the soul to praise Him, as the Psalmist speaks, *Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.* [4.] The declaring and extolling of His holiness, speaking, upon all seasonable occasions, honorably of his name. [5.] The humble sense and acknowledgment of our own unholiness in his presence: and therefore, all those lowly confessions of sins and of their own unworthiness, that we find in the prayers of the prophets, are so many hallowings of the name of God, giving the glory of holiness to Him alone, and taking the shame of their own pollutions. Thus, Dan. ix. Isa. lxiv. &c. As some of the American Aborigines have a custom, when they appear before their king, to put on their worst apparel, that all the magnificence may rest upon him alone, and appear the better; thus, though the majesty of God, in itself being infinite, needs nothing else to commend it, yet, to our apprehension of it, it may be thus, and the saints in desire of His glory may intend this, to set off the lustre of His purity and excellency, in the humble confessions of their own vileness: *To thee, O Lord, belongeth righteousness, but to us confusion of face.* Dan. ix. 7. [6.] The hal-

lowing of God's name, is an earnest endeavor of conformity with Him in holiness ; first, in heart, that must be the principle seat of it, and then, holiness in all our words and actions, and the whole course of our lives. This is that which the Lord continually presses upon His people, *Be ye holy, for I am holy.* Levit. xix. 2 ; xx. 7 ; xxi. 8, &c. And this is the most effectual sanctifying of His name by way of declaring it holy, when His people walk in holiness. Though you tell the world that He is holy, they know Him not : they can neither see Him nor His holiness ; but when they see that there are men, taken out of the same lump of polluted nature with themselves, and yet so renewed and changed, that they hate the defilements of the world, and do indeed live holily in the midst of a perverse generation ; this may convince them that there is a brighter spring of holiness, where it is in fulness, from whence these drops are, that they perceive in men ; for seeing it is not in nature, there must be another principle of it, and that can be no other than this holy God. Thus is His name hallowed, and He known to be holy, by the holiness of His people.

Give us this day our our daily Bread.

Though a man hath his provision by him, not only of a day, but of many years, yet hath he need still daily to ask it of God ; for it is still in God's hand to give it him, or not to give, though it is in a man's own hand in present possession. [1.] It is in God's disposal to continue it to him, or suddenly to pluck it from him out of his hand, or even out of his mouth, *ut bolus creptus è faucibus.* How many have been thus on a sudden turned out of great estates into extreme poverty, either by the hands of men, which are moved by God, or by some immediate accident from his own hand ; and others, by little and little, their estates consuming and melting as snow-balls ! In the former, the judgment of God is as a *lion*, and in the latter as a *moth*, as the Prophet speaks. Hos. v. 12, 14. Again, [2.] If God do continue a man in his possessions, yet, there is further needful for his cheerful use of daily bread, that calmness and content of mind, and healthfulness of body, which are God's peculiar gifts, without which all is unsavory. Is the mind in bitterness or distemper, or the body tied to its sick-bed, this disrelishes a man's daily bread, though it be of the richest kind. [3.] Having bread, and a disposition to use it, yet, there is further an influence of blessing from God needful to make it serve its proper end ; and without this, that staff of life is but as a broken staff in a man's hand, that cannot support him. [4.] Besides that ordinary blessing, there is yet something further, that a godly man desires, and desires most of all, a secret character and stamp of the peculiar favor of God even upon his *bread*, his

temporal enjoyments. And this is a proper fruit of prayer. As there is (as is already said) a peculiar voice of God's own children in this request, so, God knows it particularly, and distinguishes it from the common voice of natural men, and other creatures that call for supply; and therefore, He gives that peculiar voice of their suit, a peculiar answer: together with the *daily bread* which He gives to others, and a common blessing on it, they have something that is not given to others. This is that which particularly sweetens their bread, that they receive it after a special manner out of their Father's own hand, having humbly asked it by prayer as His gift.

Forgive us our Debts as we forgive our Debtors.

Seeing this is a request of so great moment, may we not wonder at ourselves, that we are so cold and indifferent in it? But the true reason of this is, because so few are truly sensible of this heavy debt, of the weight of sin unpardoned. A man who feels it not, prays thus, not much troubling his thoughts whether it be granted or no; but he who is indeed pressed with the burden of sin, cries in earnest, *Lord, forgive*. David knew what he said, when he called him *blessed whose sin is forgiven*; the word is, who is *unloaded of his sin*. He was a king, and a great captain, but he says not, He is a blessed man who wears a crown, or who is successful in war, but, Blessed is he whose sin is taken off his shoulders; whatsoever he is otherwise, he is a happy man. It is in vain to offer a conscience groaning under sin, anything else, until it be eased of that. If you should see a man lying grovelling under some weight that is ready to press him to death, and should bring sweet music to him, and cover a table with delicacies before him, but let him lie still under his burden, could he, think you, take any pleasure in those things? Were it not rather to mock him, to use him so?

And though we feel it not as troubled consciences do, yet, we are truly miserable in all enjoyments, until this forgiveness be obtained. To what purpose daily bread, yea, what is the greatest abundance of all outward things, but a glistening misery, if this be wanting? But he who is once forgiven, and received into favor with God, what can befall him amiss? Though he hath no more of the world than *daily bread*, and of the coarsest sort, he hath a continual feast within: as he that said, *Brown bread and the Gospel, is good fare*. Now, the Gospel is the doctrine of this forgiveness of sin, and is therefore so sweet to an humbled sinner. Yea, though a man have not only a small portion of earthly comforts, but be under divers afflictions and chastisements, yet, this makes him cheerful in all: as Luther said, *Veri Domine,*



&c. Use me as Thou wilt, seeing Thou hast forgiven my sin, all is well.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now, the request running thus, they who do not forgive their brethren, turn it into a most heavy curse to themselves, and, in effect, pray daily, *Lord, never forgive me my sin.* And whether they say this or no, He will do thus, if we be such fools as not to accept of such an agreement. He hath infinite debt upon our heads, that we shall never be able to pay : now, though there is no proportion, yet He is graciously pleased, without further reckoning, to forgive us all, and discharge us fully, if we accept (as it were) of this His letter of exchange, and for His sake forgive our brethren the few pence that at the most they can be owing us, in lieu of the thousands of talents that He acquits to us. And by this as our certain evidence, we may be assured of our pardon, and rejoice in it, as our Saviour after clearly affirms : and therefore, on the contrary, (which he likewise tells us,) may well take our debates, and hatreds, and desires of revenge, as a countersign, testifying to us that we are *not* forgiven at God's hands.

And think not to satisfy him with superficial forgivenesses and reconcilements. Would we be content with such pardon from God, to have only a present forbearance of revenge, or that He should not quarrel with us, but no further friendship with Him ; that he should either use strangeness with us, and not speak to us, or only for fashion's sake ? And yet, such are many of our reconcilements with our brethren. God's way of forgiving is thorough and hearty, both to forgive and to forget (as Jer. xxxi.) ; and if thine be not so, thou hast no portion in His.

What a base, miserable humor is this same desire of revenge, this spirit of malice that possesses men, and they think themselves brave in it, that they forgive no injuries, can put up with no affronts, as they speak ! Solomon was of another mind, and he was a king, and a wise king, and knew well enough what honor meant : *It is the glory of a man to pass by a transgression,* said he, Prov. xix. 11. And we see, inferior magistrates and officers may punish ; but it is a part of the prerogative of kings to pardon : it is royal to forgive, yea, it is Divine, it is to be like a God. Matt. v. 44—8. *Be you perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect—* and the perfection is—*Do good to them that persecute you, &c., as HE causeth the sun to shine on the just and on the unjust.*

There is more true pleasure in forgiving, than ever any man found in revenge. Fr. Desales said, "That whereas men think it so hard a thing to forgive a wrong, he found it so sweet, that, if the contrary were commanded him, he would have much ado to obey it." Were the law of love written in our hearts, it would be thus with us. It would teach us effectually to forgive others,

if we knew and found in our experience the boundless love of God in forgiving us.

#### The way of Sin down Hill.

The way of sin is *motus in proclivi*, down hill : a man cannot stop where he would ; and he that will be tampering with dangerous occasions, in confidence of his resolution, shall find himself often carried beyond his purpose. If you pray, then, watch too. But as that word commands our diligence, so this imports our weakness in ourselves, and our strength to be in Another ; that, as we watch, we must pray ; and without this, we shall watch in vain, and be a prey to our enemy. Truly, had we no power beyond our own, we might give over, and be hopeless of coming through to salvation, so many enemies and hazards in the way. *Alas !* might a Christian say, looking upon the multitude of temptations without, and of corruptions within himself, and the weakness of the grace he hath, *How can this be ? Shall I ever attain my journey's end ?* But again, when he looks upward, and lifts his eyes above his difficulties, beholds the strength of God engaged for Him, directs his prayers to him for help, and is assured to find it ; this upholds him, and answers all. There is a roaring lion that seeks to devour, but there is a strong rescuing lion, *The Lion of the tribe of Judah*, who will deliver. *The God of peace*, says the Apostle, *will bruise Satan under your feet shortly*. Rom. xvi. 20. He says not, *we* shall bruise him under our feet, but *God* shall do it. Yet, he says not, He shall bruise him under *His own* feet, but under *yours* : the victory shall be ours, though wrought by Him. And he shall do it *shortly* : wait a while, and it shall be done. And *the God of peace*, because He is the God of peace, He shall subdue that grand disturber of your peace, and shall give you a perfect victory, and, after it, endless peace : He shall free you of his trouble and molestation. Grace is a stranger here, and therefore hardly used, and hated by many foes ; but there is a promise of a *new heaven and a new earth where dwells righteousness* : there it shall be at home and in quiet ; no spoiling nor robbery in all that holy mountain.

#### Honor the Sabbath Day to keep it Holy.

All the other precepts of this Law remaining in full force in their proper sense, it cannot but be an injury done to this Command, either flatly to refuse it that privilege, or, which is little better, to evaporate it into allegories. Nor was the day abolished

as a typical ceremony, but that seventh only changed to a seventh still, and the very next to it; He who is *Lord of the Sabbath*, either himself immediately, or by his authority in his apostles, appointing that day of his resurrection for *our sabbath*, adding to the remembrance of the first creation, the memorial of accomplishing the new creation, the work of our redemption, which appeared then manifestly to be perfected, when our Redeemer broke the chains of death, and arose from the grave: he who is the light of the new world, shining forth anew the same day that light was made in the former creation. This day was St. John, *in the Spirit*, taken up with those extraordinary revelations. Rev. i. 10. They were extraordinary indeed. And certainly, every Christian ought to be *in the Spirit*, in holy meditations and exercises on this day, more than the rest; winding up his soul, which the body poises downwards, to a higher degree of heavenliness;—ought to be particularly careful to bring a humble heart to speak to God in prayer, and hear Him in His word, a heart breathing after Him, longing to meet with Himself in His ordinances. And certainly, it is safer and sweeter to be thus affected towards *the Lord's day*, than to be much busied about the debate of the change.

The very life of religion doth much depend upon the solemn observation of this day. Consider, if we should intermit the keeping of it but for one year, to what a height profaneness would rise in those who fear not God, who yet are restrained, though not converted, by the preaching of the word, and their outward partaking of public worship. Yea, those who are most spiritual, would find themselves losers by the intermission.

*What forbidden.*—1. Bodily labor on this day, where necessity unavoidable, or piety, commands not. 2. Sporting and pastimes. This is not to make it a sabbath to God, but to our lusts and to Satan; and hath a stronger antipathy with the worship of God, and that temper of mind they intend in it, than the hardest labor. 3. Resting from these, but withal, resting from the proper work of this day, neglecting the work of God in the assemblies of His people. The beasts can keep it thus, as we see in the Precept. 4. Resorting to the public worship of God, but in a customary, cold way, without affection and spiritual delight in it. 5. Spending the remainder of the day incongruously, in vain visits and discourses, &c.

*How observed.*—1. By pious remembrance of it, and preparation, sequestering not only the body from the labor, but our souls from the cares and other vain thoughts of the world. 2. Attending upon the public worship of God willingly and heartily, as the joy and refreshment of our souls. Isa. lviii. Psal. cxxii. 3. Spending the remainder of it in private, holily; as much as may be, in meditation of the word preached, and conference, in prayer,

reading, and meditating on the great works of God, of creation, redemption, &c.

This is the loveliest, brightest day in all the week to a spiritual mind. These *rests* refresh the soul in God, that finds nothing but turmoil in the creature. Should not this day be welcome to the soul, that sets it free to mind its own business, which is on other days to attend the business of its servant, the body? And these are a certain pledge to it of that expected freedom, when it shall enter to an eternal sabbath, and rest in Him forever, who is the only rest of the soul.

## FROM MEDITATIONS AND LECTURES ON SELECT PSALMS.

The Blessedness of the Man, whose Iniquities are forgiven.

This weighty sentence, of itself so admirable, Paul renders yet more illustrious, by inserting it into his reasonings on the topic of justification, Rom. iv. 6, as a celebrated testimony of that great article of our faith. "David," says he, "thus describeth the blessedness of that man, saying, *Blessed is he whose iniquities are forgiven.*" So that this is David's opinion concerning true happiness: he says not, Blessed are those who rule over kingdoms, blessed are those generals who are renowned for their martial bravery and success, though he himself had both these titles to boast of. It is not the encomiums of the greatest multitudes, nor the breath of popular applause, nor any other degree of human honor, which entitles a man to this character. It is not said, Blessed is he who ploughs many thousand acres of land, or who has heaped together mountains of gold and silver; nor, blessed is he who has married a beautiful and rich woman, or, (which in his age, or even now in those eastern countries, might be the case,) he who was possessed of many such; nor, Blessed is he who understands the secrets of nature, or even the mysteries of religion; but *Oh, happy man whose sins are pardoned, and to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile*, whose breast is full, not of feigned repentance, but of a fervent love of holiness, and hatred of sin. This makes life happy, nay, absolutely blessed. But alas! when we inculcate these things, we sing to the deaf. The ignorance and folly of mankind will not cease to pronounce the proud and the covetous happy, and those who triumph in successful wickedness, and who, in



chase of these lying shadows of happiness, destroy their days, and their years, and their souls.

"Alas," says the wise Roman, "how little do some who thirst most impatiently after glory, know what it is, or where it is to be sought!" which is equally applicable to that true calm and serenity of mind which indeed all pursue, but yet few are able to attain. But as for us who enjoy the celestial instruction of this sacred volume, if we are ignorant of it, our ignorance is quite inexcusable, obstinate, and affected, since we are wilfully blind in the clearest and most refulgent light. This points out that good which can completely fill all the most extended capacities of the human soul, and which we generally seek for in vain on all sides, catching at it where it is not to be found, but ever neglecting it where alone it is. But is it then possible at once to be solidly and completely happy? You have not merely the ideas of it, but the thing itself, not only clearly pointed out, but most freely offered, with Divine munificence; so that if you do not obstinately reject the offer, it must be your own. And this happiness consists in returning to the favor and friendship of God, who most mercifully grants us the free pardon of all our sins, if we do, with unfeigned repentance and a heart free of all guile, not only humbly confess and lament them, but entirely forsake, and with implacable hatred forever renounce them. All the names, all the variety of felicities, bliss and happiness are accumulated on that man who has known this *change of the right hand of the Most High*, on whom this bright day of expiation and pardon has beamed. He easily looks down from on high on all the empty titles and false images of earthly happiness, and when he is bereaved of them all, yea, and beset on every side with what the world calls misfortunes and afflictions, ceases not to be happy. In sorrow he is joyful, in poverty rich, and in chains free: when he seems buried deep, so that not one ray of the sun can reach him, he is surrounded with radiant lustre; when overwhelmed with ignominy, he glories; and in death itself, he lives, he conquers, he triumphs. What can be heavy to that man who is eased of the intolerable burden of sin? How animated was that saying of Luther, "Smite, Lord, smite, for thou has absolved me from my sins." Whose anger should he fear who knows that God is propitious to him,—that Supreme *King, whose wrath is indeed the messenger of death, but the light of His countenance is life*; who gladdens all by the rays of His favor, and by one smile disperses the darkest cloud, and calms the most turbulent tempest?

But we must now observe the complication of a two-fold good, in constituting this felicity: for we have two things here connected, as consiring to make the person spoken of blessed; the free remission of sin, and the inward purification of the heart. *In whose spirit there is no guile.* This simplicity is a most excellent

part of purity, opposed to all wickedness and arts of deceit; and in common speech, that which is simple and has no foreign mixture, is called *pure*. Pardon presents us as just and innocent before our Judge; and that sanctity is not to be regarded as constituting any part of our justifying righteousness before God, nor as only the condition or sign of our felicity, but is truly and properly a part of it. Purity is the accomplishment of our felicity, begun on earth, and to be consummated in Heaven; that purity, I say, which is begun here, and shall there be consummated. But if any one think he can divide these two things, which the hand of God has joined by so inseparable a bond, it is a vain dream. Nay, by attempting to separate these two parts of happiness, he will in fact only exclude himself from the whole. Jesus, our victorious Saviour, has snatched us from the jaws of eternal death; but, to be delivered from the cruel tyranny and bonds of sin, and to be brought into the blessed liberty of the sons of God, was another essential part of our redemption, and if any one does not embrace this with equal alacrity and delight as the other benefit, he is a wretched slave of the most mean and ignoble spirit, and being equally unworthy of both parts of this stupendous deliverance, he will justly forfeit and lose both. And this is the epide-mical Antinomianism of the Christian world, because they who labor under it have nothing but the name of Christians: they gladly hear of the pardon of their sins, and the salvation of their souls, while they are averse to the doctrine of holiness and repentance. It is a disagreeable message, *a hard saying, and who can bear it!* But Oh, the incomparable charms of holiness! It is to be desired, not only for the sake of other benefits which come in its train, but especially for itself: so that he who is not transported with a most ardent love of it, is blind, and deserves to be thrust into the mill, to tread that uncomfortable round, and to grind there; deserves to be a slave forever, since he knows not how to use liberty when offered to him. Shall the Stoic say, "The servant of philosophy is truly free," and shall we scruple to assert the same concerning pure religion, and evangelical holiness? Now this freedom from guile, this fair simplicity, of which the Psalmist speaks, is deservedly reckoned among the chief endowments of a pure soul, and is here named instead of all the rest, as nothing is more like to that God who inspects the very heart, in nothing do we so much resemble Him; and therefore it is most agreeable to Him, because most like unto Him. He is the most simple of all beings, and is indeed Truth itself, and therefore, He *desires truth in the inward parts*, and hates *a heart and a heart*, as the Hebrew phrase is to express those that are double-hearted. And how much our blessed Redeemer esteems this simplicity, we may learn from the earnestness with which He inculcates it upon His disciples, that they should be

*simple as doves.* Matt. x. 16. We may learn it also from the honorable testimony he bears to this character in Nathanael, when he pronounces him, John i. 47, *an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.* And especially from his own perfect example, as it is said of Him, 1 Pet. ii. 22, *He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.* Perhaps the Psalmist might the more willingly mention this virtue, as he reflected with penitential distress on his crafty and cruel attempt of covering that adultery which he had committed, with the vail of murder. But however that was, it is certain that this guileless sincerity of heart holds the first rank in the graces that attend true repentance. It may be sometimes our duty to open our sins to men, by an ingenuous confession; but it is always our duty to do it to God, who promises to cover them only on this condition, that we do sincerely uncover them ourselves. But if we affect that which is His part, He will, to our unspeakable damage, do that which He had assigned to us. If we hide them, he will bring them into open light, and will discuss and examine each with the greater severity: "He," says Ambrose, "who burdens himself, makes his error so much the lighter." "In proportion to the degree," says Tertullian, "in which you are unwilling to spare yourself, God will spare you." But what madness is it to attempt to conceal any action from Him, from whom, as Thales wisely declares, "you cannot so much as conceal a thought?" But not now to insist upon the impossibility of a concealment, a wise man would not wish to cover his wounds and his disease from that physician, from whose skilful hand he might otherwise receive healing; and this is what the Psalmist presently after, for our instruction, confesses.

FROM MEDITATIONS ON PSALM CXXX.

Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord.

It is undoubtedly both a useful and a pleasant employment, to observe the emotions of great and heroic minds in great and arduous affairs; but that mind only is truly great, and superior to the whole world, which does in the most placid manner subject itself to God, securely casting all its burdens and cares upon Him, in all the uncertain alterations of human affairs, looking at His hand, and fixing its regard upon that alone. Such the royal prophet David declares himself every where to have been, and no where more evidently than in this Psalm, which seems to have been composed by him. He lifts up his head amidst surrounding waves, and directing his face and his voice to Heaven, he says, *Out of the depths, O Lord, do I cry unto Thee.* For so I would render it, as he does not seem to express a past fact, but as the

Hebrew idiom imports, a prayer which he was now actually presenting.

*Out of the depths.*] Being as it were immersed and overwhelmed in an abyss of misery and calamities. It is indeed the native lot of man, to *be born to trouble*, as it is for the sparks (the children of the coal, as the original expression signifies) to *fly upward*. Life and grief are congenial; but men who are born again, seem, as in a redoubled proportion, to be *twice born to trouble*: with so many and so great evils are they as it were laden, beyond all other men, and that to such a degree, that they may seem sometimes to be oppressed with them. And if any think this is strange, surely, as the Apostle expresses it, *he cannot see afar off*; at best, he only looks at the surfaces of things, and cannot penetrate far into those depths. For even the philosophers themselves, untaught by Divine revelation, investigated admirable reasons for such dispensations of Providence, and undertook in this respect boldly to plead the cause of God. "God," says the Roman sage, "loves His own people truly, but he loves them severely! As the manner in which fathers express their love to their children, is generally very different from that of mothers; they order them to be called up early to their studies, and suffer them not to be idle in those days, when their usual business is interrupted, but sometimes put them on laboring till the sweat flows down, and sometimes by their discipline excite their tears; while the mother fondles them in her bosom, keeps them in the shade, and knows not how to consent, that they should weep, or grieve, or labor. God bears the heart of a father to good men, and there is strength rather than tenderness in His love; they are therefore exercised with labors, sorrows, and losses, that they may grow robust; whereas, were they to be fattened by luxurious fare and indulged in indolence, they would not only sink under fatigues, but be burdened with their own unwieldly bulk." Presently after, he quotes a remarkable saying of Demetrius the Cynic, to this purpose, "He seems to be the unhappiest of mankind, who has never been exercised with adversity, as he cannot have had an opportunity of trying the strength of his mind." To wish to pass life without it, is to be ignorant of one part of nature, so that I may pronounce thee to be miserable, if thou hast never been miserable. If thou hast passed through life without ever struggling with an enemy, no one, not even thou thyself, can know whether thou art able to make any resistance: whereas in afflictions, we experience not so much what our own strength is, as what is the strength of God in us, and what the aid of Divine grace is, which often bears us up under them to a surprising degree, and makes us joyful by a happy exit; so that we shall be able to say, *My God, my strength, and my deliverer*. Thus the Church becomes conspicuous in the midst of the flames, like the burning



bush, *through the good-will of Him that dwelt in it.* And when it seems to be overwhelmed with waters, God brings it out of them cleansed and beautified—*mergas profundo, pulchrior, exilit*; He pulges it in the deep, and it rises fairer than before.

We will not here maintain that paradox of the Stoics, *That evils which happen to good men, are not to be called evils at all*; which, however, is capable of a very good sense, since religion teaches us that the greatest evils are changed, and *work together for good*, which comes almost to the same thing, and perhaps was the true meaning of the Stoics. Banishment and poverty are indeed evils in one sense, *i. e.*, they have something hard and grievous in them; but when they fall on a good and brave man, they seem to lay aside the malignity of their nature, and become tame and gentle. The very sharpness of them excites and exercises virtue: by exciting they increase it, so that the root of faith shoots the stronger, and fixes the deeper, and thereby adds new strength to fortitude and patience. And, as we see in this example before us, affliction does by a happy kind of necessity drive the soul to confess its sin, to flee as it were to seek its refuge under the wing of the Divine goodness, and to fix its hope upon God. And this is certainly one great advantage which the pious soul gains by adversity, that it calls away the affections from earth and earthly things, or rather tears them away, when obstinately adhering to them. “It is necessary that they suffer such hardships as these,” as one expresses it, “lest they should love this inconvenient stable, in which they now are obliged to lodge, as if it were their own house.” It is necessary that they should perceive that they are *strangers and foreigners upon earth*, that they may more frequently, and with more ardent desire, groan after that better country, and often repeat it, *Dear Home! Most desirable Home!* The children and heirs of the kingdom must be weaned by wormwood, lest they should be so enchanted by the allurements of the flesh, and the poisonous sweetness of secular enjoyments, as to barter away the true and pure joy of their blessed hope, for this false, polluted, and deadly joy; and lest, dissolved in pleasure, the Heaven-born soul should be broken under the yoke of this pernicious flesh, the root of so many passions. Lastly, we see how much vigor and vehemence affliction adds to prayer; for the divine Psalmist, the deeper he sinks, cries to God in so much the louder accents—*Out of the depths have I cried.*

This prayer contains those precious virtues which, in a grateful temperature, render every prayer acceptable to God—faith, fervor, and humility. Faith, in that he prays *out of the deeps*; fervor, in that *he cries*, and both again expressed in the next word; faith, as in the midst of surrounding calamities he does not despair of redress; fervor, as he urges it with repeated importunity, and the same word uttered again and again. And to complete all, humil-

ity expresses itself in what follows, where he speaks as one that felt himself sinking, as one who was plunged in a sea of iniquities, as well as calamities; and acknowledges he was so overwhelmed with them, as to be unable to stand, unless supported by pure mercy and grace. *If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, who shall stand?* Thus, here again, faith manifests itself more clearly, together with its kindred affections of hope and charity, which, like three graces, join their hands, and by an inseparable union support each other. You have faith in the 4th verse, *There is forgiveness with Thee*; hope in the 5th, *I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope*; charity in the 7th and 8th, where he does in a most benevolent manner invite all Israel to a communion of the same faith and hope, and, in order to confirm them more abundantly, does in a most animated manner proclaim the riches of the Divine benignity. Such is the composition of this excellent prayer, which thus compounded, like a pillar of aromatic smoke from myrrh, frankincense, and every other most fragrant perfume, ascends grateful to the throne of God. And this you may take instead of the analysis of the remaining verses, which to handle by a more minute dissection of words, and to clothe in the trite phrases of the schools, to speak freely, would be as barren and useless as it is easy and puerile. And indeed, I cannot but form the same judgment of the common way of catching at a multitude of observations from any scripture, and of pressing it with violence, as if remarks were to be estimated by number rather than weight, propriety, and use. But here let every one follow his own genius and taste; for we are willing to give the liberty we take.

#### Prayer the natural language of the Children of God.

Prayer is the natural and genuine voice of the children of God; and as the Latin word *Oratio* properly signifies articulate speech, as it distinguishes man from other animals, so, in this other signification, it expresses that by which the godly are distinguished from the rest of mankind: it is the proper idiom of the citizens of Heaven. Others may recite some words of prayer, but they do not pray; as parrots and other birds, by the industry of their teacher, may learn to imitate human voices, yet, they do not speak; there is something wanting in all their most skilful chattering, which is the very thing that is also wanting in the language of most that are said to pray, and that is, *mind* and *meaning*, affections correspondent to the words, or rather, to which the words may conform as to their original cause, and of which they may be the true index and sign. The spirit of this world knows not how to pray, nor does a *spirit of adoption and liberty* know how to forbear praying,—the *spirit of adoption*, says the Apostle,

by which we cry *Abba, Father*. Nor can they who are new-born by that Spirit, live without frequent prayer. Prayer is to them, as the natural and necessary respiration of that new and Divine life, as Lam. iii. 56. *Turn not away from my breathing*: the Hebrew word there made use of, *leruhethi*, properly signifies the *vital respiration* of animals. Yet, notwithstanding all this, what we said above is true, and evidently appears from the passage before us, that affliction often adds vigor to prayers, how lively and assiduous soever they may have been before. Let it be so, that Prayer is the natural language of believing souls, by which they daily address their heavenly Father, yet, when they are pressed with an uncommon pain or danger, it is no less natural, that this voice should be louder than ordinary, and should be raised into a cry. It is indeed the breath of faith and heavenly affections, and when they are vehemently pressed by any burden, and almost expiring under it, they breathe quicker than before, and with greater effort. Thus, they who have been used to the greatest heights of daily devotion, yet, in surrounding calamities, pray more fervently and more frequently than ordinary. And this is to be numbered among the chief benefits attending afflictions, and it would surely be well worth our while to experience all the hardest pressures of them, if we may gain this; that the languor, and sloth, and stupidity, into which our minds and our souls are ready insensibly to sink while all is calm and serene about us, may be happily shaken off by something which the world may call an unhappy event; that some more violent gust of wind may fan the sacred flame that seems almost extinguished, and blow it up into greater ardor. It will be happy for us, that, with the Psalmist, we should sometimes *sink in deep waters*, that so we, who in prosperity do but whisper or mutter out our prayers, may from *the depths cry aloud unto God*. Oh, how frequently and how ardently did David pray in the deserts and the caves, and it is he who here cries out of the deep, and perhaps these deep recesses are those from which he was now crying; but when secure amidst the ease and delights of the court, and walking at leisure on his house-top, he was tempted by his own wandering eyes, and having intermitted the fervor of prayer, burned with impure fires. Our vows are cruel to ourselves, if they demand nothing but gentle zephyrs, and flowery fields, and calm repose, as the lot of our life; for these pleasant things often prove the most dangerous enemies to our nobler and dearer life.

Oh! how true is that saying, that "Faith is safe when in danger, and in danger when secure; and Prayer is fervent in straits, but in joyful and prosperous circumstances, if not quite cold and dead, at least lukewarm." Oh, happy straits, if they hinder the mind from flowing forth upon earthly objects, and mingling itself with the mire; if they favor our correspondence with Heaven,

and quicken our love to celestial objects, without which, what we call life, may more properly deserve the name of death!

\* \* \* \* \*

Ought not this intercourse of men with God by prayer to be most reverently and gratefully received and cultivated by all, and numbered among the chief favors of the Divine nature, and the chief dignities of the human nature? And truly this, as much as anything that can be imagined, is a lamentable argument of the stupidity of man in this fallen state, that such an honor is so little regarded. Opportunities of conversing with nobles or princes of the earth are rare and short; and if a man of inferior station be admitted to such a favor, he glories in it, as if he were raised to Heaven; though they are but images made of the same clay with himself, and only set upon a basis a little higher than the rest. But the liberty of daily and free converse with the King of Heaven is neglected for every trifle, and indeed is counted as nothing, though his very aspect alone fills so many myriads of blessed spirits above with full and perpetual felicity.

Again, is it not most reasonable to acknowledge, by this spiritual sacrifice of prayer, His infinite power and goodness, and that most providential care by which He governs all human affairs? And when our very being and life depend upon Him, and all the comfort and happiness of life, how congruous is it to exhibit this sign and token of His holding us by the hand, and of our being borne up by Him! Again, what sweeter lenitive of all those miseries with which mortal life so continually abounds, can be invented, than this, to pour out all our care and trouble into His bosom, as that of a most faithful friend and affectionate father! Then does the good man lay himself down to sleep with sweet composure in the midst of waves and storms, when he has lulled all the cares and sorrows of his heart to sleep, by pouring out his prayer to God. And once more, how pleasant is it, that these benefits, which are of so great a value both on their own account and that of the Divine benignity from whence they come, should be delivered into our hands, marked, as it were, with this grateful inscription, *That they have been obtained by prayer!*

The Carnal Mind sees God in nothing; the Spiritual Mind sees Him in everything.

The carnal mind sees God in nothing, not even in spiritual things, His word and ordinances. The spiritual mind sees Him in every thing, even in natural things, in looking on the heavens and the earth, and all the creatures,—*THEY* heavens; sees all in that notion, in their relation to God as His work, and in them His glory appearing; stands in awe, fearing to abuse His creatures and His favors to his dishonor. *The day is Thine, and the night*



*also is Thine* ; therefore ought not I to forget Thee through the day nor in the night.

All that I use, and all that I have, is not mine, but Thine, and therefore all shall be *for THEE* ; Thou art my aim and scope in all. Therefore God quarrels with His people, because they had forgotten this. Hos. ii. 8, &c. The most are strangers to these thoughts ; they can eat, drink, and sleep, lie down and rise up, and pass one day after another, without one reverend or affectionate thought of God. They may give Him a formal good morrow, and then farewell for all the day long ; they offer up their prayers, (as they speak,) and think they have done enough, and that afterwards their hearts may go whither they will, provided they escape grosser sins ; they never check themselves in wandering from God all the day, if they fall not into some deep mire.

But even they who are somewhat more mindful of God, and see Him in His works, and consider them so as to observe Him in them, yet are very faulty in thinking of Him seldom, and in the slightness of such thoughts : they are not deep in them. We do not accustom ourselves to walk with God, to a continued and delightful converse with Him, to be still with Him. We can turn our eyes no way but He is visible and legible ; and if He were our delight, and His name sweet to us, we should eye that more in everything, than the things themselves.

The heart will readily espy and take hold of every small occasion of remembering that which it loves. That which carries any impression of the person on whom the affection is set is more looked upon on that side, and in that reference, than any other.

Certainly, were God the choice of our hearts, our natural use and enjoyment of things would not relish so much with us, nor take us up so much, as the viewing of Him in them all. In our affairs and our refreshments, in company and apart, in the beholding of heaven and earth, and all that is round about us, our eye would be most on Him whom our soul loveth. What a pity, and what a shame is it, that we who profess ourselves to be His children, and even they who truly are so, should so little mind our Father and his greatness and glory, who is continually minding us and our good ! It is indeed a double standing wonder in the world which he hath made, that God should take so much notice of Man, and Man should take so little notice of God.

I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue ; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.

Certainly it is a high dignity that is conferred upon man, that he may as freely and frequently as he will, converse with Him

who made him, the great King of Heaven and Earth. It is, indeed, a wonder, that God should honor poor creatures so much; but it is no less strange, that men having so great privileges, the most part of them do use them so little. Seldom do we come to Him in times of ease. And when we are spurred to it by afflictions and pains, commonly we try all other means rather than this, which is the alone true and unfailing comfort. But such as have learned this way of laying their pained head and heart in His bosom, they are truly happy, though in the world's language they be never so miserable.

This is the resource of this holy man in the time of his affliction, whatever it was,—prayer and tears, bemoaning himself before his God and Father, and that the more fervently, in that he finds his speaking to men so unprofitable; and therefore he refrains from it.

The Psalm consists of two parts, his silence to men, and his speech to God; and both of them are set with such sweet notes of music, though they be sad, that they deserve well to be committed *To the Chief Musician*.

*I said I will take heed to my ways.*] It was to himself that he said it; and it is impossible for any other to prove a good or a wise man, without much of this kind of speech to himself. It is one of the most excellent and distinguishing faculties of a reasonable creature; much beyond vocal speech, for in that, some birds may imitate us; but neither bird nor beast have anything of this kind of language, of reflecting or discoursing with itself. It is a wonderful brutality in the greatest part of men, who are so little conversant in this kind of speech, being framed and disposed for it, and which is not only of itself excellent, but of continual use and advantage; but it is a common evil among men, to go abroad, and out of themselves, which is a madness and a true distraction. It is true, a man hath need of a well set mind, when he speaks to himself; for otherwise, he may be worse company to himself than if he were with others. But he ought to endeavor to have a better with him, to call in God to his heart to dwell with him. If thus we did, we should find how sweet this were to speak to ourselves, by now and then intermixing our speech with discourses unto God. For want of this, the most part not only lose their time in vanity, in their converse abroad with others, but do carry in heaps of that vanity to the stock which is in their own hearts, and do converse with that in secret, which is the greatest and deepest folly in the world.

Other solitary employments, as reading the disputes and controversies that are among men, are things not unuseful; yet, all turns to waste, if we read not our own heart, and study that. This is the study of every holy man, and between this and the consideration of God, he spends his hours and endeavors. Some have

recommended the reading of men more than books; but what is in the one, or in both of them, or all the world beside, without this? A man shall find himself out of his proper business, if he acquaint not himself with this, to speak much with God and with himself, concerning the ordering of his own ways.

It is true, it is necessary for some men, in some particular charges and stations, to regard the ways of others; and besides something also there may be of a wise observing of others, to improve the good and the evil we see in them, to our own advantage, and the bettering of our own ways, looking on them to make the repercussion the stronger on ourselves; but except it be out of charity and wisdom, it flows either from uncharitable malice, or else a curious and vain spirit, to look much and narrowly into the ways of others, and to know the manner of living of persons about us, and so to know everything but ourselves: like travellers, that are well seen in foreign and remote parts, but strangers in the affairs of their own country at home. The check that Christ gave to Peter, is due to such, *What is that to thee? Follow thou me.* John xxi. 22. Look thou to thine own feet, that they be set in the right way. It is a strange thing, that men should lay out their diligence abroad to their loss, when their pains might be bestowed to their advantage nearer at hand, at home within themselves.

It is our greatest Glory to be conformed to Christ.

This observing and watching, as it is needful, so it is a very delightful thing, though it will be hard and painful to the unexperienced. To have a man's actions and words continually curbed, so that he cannot speak or do what he would,—these are fetters and bonds; yet, to those that know it, it is a pleasure to gain experience, and to be more skilled in preventing the surprises of our enemies, and upon that to have something added to our own art, and to be more able to resist upon new occasions, and to find ourselves every day outstripping ourselves. That is the sweetest life in the world, for the soul to be dressing itself for the espousals of the Great King, putting on more of the ornaments and beauties of holiness. That is our glory, *to be made conformable to the image of God, and of Jesus Christ.* If an image had sense, it would desire nothing so much as to look on the original whence it received its name, and to become more and more like it: so it is the pleasure of renewed souls, to be looking on Him, and to be growing daily more like Him, whose living image they are, and to be fitting themselves for that day of glory wherein they shall be like Him in the perfection they are capable of. And this makes death more pleasant than life to the Believer: that which seems so bitter to the most of men, is sweetened to them most wonder-

fully. The continual observance of a man's ways, the keeping a watch continually over them, this casts a light upon the dark passage of death, which is at the end of that walk, and conveys him through to the fulness of life. So that the man who observes himself and his ways through life, hath little to do in examining them when he comes to die. It is a piece of strange folly, that we defer the whole, or a great part of our day's work, to the twilight of the evening, and are so cruel to ourselves, as to keep the great load of our life for a few hours or days, and for a pained, sickly body. He who makes it his daily work to observe his ways, is not astonished when that day comes, which long before was familiar to him every day.

I was Dumb with Silence ; I held my Peace, even from Good.

It is a very useful and profitable thing, to observe the motions and deportments of the spirits of wise and holy men, in all the various postures and conditions they are in. It is for that purpose they are drawn out to us in the Scriptures. There are some graces that are more proper, and come more in action, in times of ease and prosperity, such as temperance, moderation of mind, humility, and compassion. Others are more proper for times of distress, as faith, fortitude, patience, and resignation. It is very expedient, if not necessary, that affliction have its turns, and frequently, in the lives of the children of God ; it is the tempest that gives evidence of the pilot's skill. And as the Lord delighteth in all his works, looks on the frame and conduct of all things with pleasure, so He is delighted to look on this part, on this low sea of troubles, to see His champions meet with hard and pressing trials, such as sometimes do not only make them feel them, but do often make the conflict dubious to them, so that they seem to be almost foiled, yet do they acquit themselves, and come off with honor. It is not the excellency of grace, to be insensible in trouble, (as some philosophers would have their wise men,) but to overcome and be victorious.

Among the rest of this holy man's troubles, this was one, that the wicked did reproach him. 'This is a sharp arrow that flies thick in the world. It is one of the sharpest stings of poverty, that, as it is pinched with wants at home, so it is met with scorn abroad. It is reckoned among the sharp sufferings of holy men, Heb. xi. 36, that they suffered *bitter mockings*. Now, men commonly return these in the same kind, that is, by the tongue, whereof David is here aware. He refrains himself even *from good*; not only from his just defence, but even from good and pious discourses. We do so easily exceed in our words, that it is better sometimes to be wholly silent, than to speak that which is good : for our good borders so near upon evil, and so easy is the transi-



tion from the one to the other, that though we begin to speak of God and good things with a good intention, yet how quickly run we into another channel! Passion and self having stolen in, turn us quite from the first design of our speech. And this chiefly in disputes and debates about religion, wherein, though we begin with zeal for God, yet oft-times in the end, we testify nothing but our own passion; and sometimes we do lie one against another in defence of what we call the truth.

#### Practical Knowledge.

Now David's request is, *Lord make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am.* In which he does not desire a response from God about the day of his death, but instruction concerning the frailty and shortness of his life. But did not David know this? Yes, he knew it, and yet he desires to know it. It is very fit we should ask of God that He would make us to know the things that we do know; I mean, that what we know emptily and barely, we may know spiritually and fruitfully, and if there be any measure of this knowledge, that it may increase and grow more. We know that we are sinners, but that knowledge commonly produces nothing but cold, dry, and senseless confusion: but the right knowledge of sin would prick our hearts, and cause us to pour them out before the Lord. We know that Jesus is the Saviour of sinners; it were fit to pray that we might know more of Him, so much of Him as might make us shape and fashion our hearts to His likeness. We know we must die, and that it is no long course to the utmost period of life; yet our hearts are little instructed by this knowledge. How great need have we to pray this prayer with David here, or that with Moses, *Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* Psal. xc. 12. Did we indeed know and consider how quickly we shall pass from hence, it were not possible for us to cleave so fast to the things of this life, and, as foolish children, to wade in ditches, and fill our laps with mire and dirt; to prefer base earth and flesh to immortality and glory.

#### Inconsistency of Men in the waste of Life.

It is a great folly to complain of the shortness of our life, and yet to lavish it out so prodigally on trifles and shadows. If it were well managed, it would be sufficient for all we have to do. The only way to live indeed, is to be doing service to God and good to men: this is to live much in a little time. But when we play the fool in mis-spending our time, it may be indeed a sad thought to us, when we find it gone, and we are benighted in the dark so far from our home. But those that have their souls untied from this

world and knit to God, they need not complain of the shortness of it, having laid hold on eternal life. For this life is flying away, there is no laying hold on it; and it is no matter how soon it go away; the sooner the better, for to such persons it seems rather to go too slow.

And now, Lord, what wait I for?

I am persuaded, if many would ask this question of themselves, *What wait I for?* they would puzzle themselves and not find an answer. There are a great many things that men desire and are gaping after, but few seek after one thing chiefly and stayedly: they float up and down, and are carried without any certain motion, but by fancy and by guess; and no wind can be fair for such persons, who aim at no certain haven.

If we put this question to ourselves, What would I have? it were easy for many to answer—I would have an easy, quiet, peaceable life in this world. So would an ox or a horse. And is that all? May be you would have a greater height of pleasure and honor. But think on this one thing: there is this one crack and vanity that spoils all these things, that they will not bear you up when you lean to them in times of distress; and besides, when you have them they may be pulled from you, and if not, you must be plucked away from them within a little while. There is much seeming content in the pursuit of these things, but they are lost with greater discontent. It is God's goodness to men, to blast all things in the world to them, and to break their fairest hopes, that they may be constrained to look above to Himself: He beats them from all shores, that He may bring them to the *Rock that is higher than they*. Psal. lxi. 2.

My Hope is in Thee.

Hope is the great stock of believers: it is that which upholds them under all the faintings and sorrows of their mind in this life, and in their going *through the valley and shadow of death*. It is the *helmet of their salvation*, which, while they are looking over to eternity, beyond this present time, covers and keeps their head safe amidst all the darts that fly round about them. In the present discomfort and darkness of mind, and the saddest hours they meet with in this life, Hope is that which keeps up the soul; and it is that which David cheered up his soul with, Psal. xlii. 5. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.* And even in this point the children of the world have no great advantage of the children of God, as to the things of this life; for much of their satisfaction, such as it is,

doth hang, for the most part, on their hope ; the happiest and richest of them do still piece it out with some further expectation, something they look for beyond what they have, and the expectation of that pleases them more than all their present possessions. But this great disadvantage they have, that all their hopes are but heaps of delusions and lies, and either they die and obtain them not, or if they do obtain them, yet they obtain them not : they are so far short of what they fancied and imagined of them beforehand. But the hope of the children of God, as it is without fail sure, so it is inconceivably full and satisfying, far beyond what the largest apprehension of any man is able to reach. *Hope in God ! What is wanting there ?*

This hope lodges only in the pure heart : it is a precious liquor that can be kept only in a clean vessel, and that which is not so cannot receive it, but what it seems to receive it corrupts and destroys. It is a confidence arising from peace, agreement, and friendship, which cannot subsist betwixt the God of purity and those who allow unholiness in themselves. It is a strange impudence for men to talk of their trust and hope in God, who are in perfect hostility against Him. Bold fellows go through dangers here, but it will not be so hereafter. *Jer. ii. 27. They turn to Me the back, and not the face ; yet, in their trouble, they say, Arise and save us : they do it as confidently as if they never had despised God, but they mistake the matter ; it is not so. Go and cry,* says He, *to the gods whom ye have chosen. Judg. x. 14. When men come to die, then they catch hold of the mercy of God ; but from that their filthy hands are beat off, there is no help for them there, and so they fall down to the pit. A holy fear of God, and a happy hope in Him, are commonly linked together. Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy. Psal. xxxiii. 19.*

#### Benefit of Affliction.

We are naturally very partial judges of ourselves ; and, as if we were not sufficiently able by nature, we study and devise by art to deceive ourselves. We are ready to reckon any good that is in us to the full, nay, to multiply it beyond what it is ; and further to help this, we use commonly to look on those who have less goodness in them, who are weaker, more foolish and worse than ourselves ; and so we magnify the sense of our own worth and goodness by that comparison. And as in the goodness we have, or imagine we have, so likewise in the evils we suffer, we use to extol them very much in conceit. We account our lightest afflictions very great ; and to heighten our thoughts of them, we do readily take a view of those who are more at ease and less afflicted than ourselves ; and by these devices we nourish in ourselves

pride, by the overweening conceit of our goodness, and impatience, by the overfeeling sense of our evils. But if we would help ourselves by comparison, we should do well to view those persons who are, or have been, eminent for holiness, recorded in holy writ, or whom we know in our own times, or have heard of in former times; and by this means, we should lessen the great opinion we have of our own worth. And so likewise should we consider the many instances of great calamities and sorrows, which would tend to quiet our minds, and enable us to *possess our souls in patience*, under the little burden of trials that lies upon us. And, especially, we shall find those instances to fall in together, that as persons have been very eminent in holiness, they have also been eminent in suffering very sore strokes and sharp scourges from the hand of God. If we would think on their consuming blows and broken bones, their *bones burnt as a hearth*, and their *flesh withered as grass*, certainly, we should entertain our thoughts sometimes with wonder at God's indulgence to us, that we are so little afflicted, when so many of the children of men, and so many of the children of God, suffer so many and so hard things; and this would very much add to the stock of our praises. We should not think that we are more innocent in not deserving those things that are inflicted on others, but rather, that He who thus measures out to them and to us, knows our size, and sees how weak we are in comparison of them; and that therefore He is indulgent to us, not because we are better, but because we are weaker, and are not able to bear so much as he lays on the stronger shoulders. Even in the sharpest of these rods, there is mercy. It is a privilege to the sheep that is ready to wander to be beaten into the right way. When thou art corrected, think that thereby thy sins are to be purged out, thy passions and lust to be crucified by these pains; and certainly, he that finds any cure of the evils of his spirit by the hardest sufferings of his flesh, gets a very gainful bargain. If thou account sin thy greatest unhappiness and mischief, thou wilt be glad to have it removed on any terms. There is at least in the time of affliction, a cessation from some sins; the raging lust of ambition and pride doth cease, when a man is laid upon his back; and these very cessations are some advantages.

#### Hold not Thy Peace at my Tears

Though this gift of tears doth often flow from the natural temper, yet where that temper becomes spiritual and religious, it proves a singular instrument of repentance and prayer. But yet there may be a very great height of piety and godly affections where tears are wanting; yea, this defect may proceed from a singular sublimity of religion in their souls, being acted more in the upper region of the intellectual mind, and so not communicat-



ing much with the lower affections, or these expressions of them. We are not to judge of our spiritual proficiency by the *gift of prayer*, for the heart may be very spiritually affected, where there is no readiness or volubility of words. The sure measure of our growth, is to be had from our holiness, which stands in this, to see how our hearts are crucified to the world, and how we are possessed with the love of God, and with ardent longings after union with Him, and dwelling in His presence hereafter, and in being conformed to His will here.

It is the greatest folly imaginable in some, to shed tears for their sins, and within a little while to return to them again : they think there is some kind of absolution in this way of easy venting themselves by tears in prayer, and when a new temptation returns, they easily yield to it. This is lightness and foolishness, like the inconstancy of a woman who entertains new lovers in her mourning apparel, having expressed much sorrow and grief for her former husband.

Oh spare me, that I may recover Strength, before I go hence, and be no more.

Why is it that we do not extremely hate that which we so desperately love, sin ? For the deformity of itself is unspeakable : and, besides, it is the cause of all our woes. Sin hath opened the sluices, and lets in all the deluge of sorrows which makes the life of poor man nothing else than vanity and misery, so that the meanest orator in the world may be eloquent enough on that subject. What is our life, but a continual succession of many deaths ? Though we should say nothing of all the bitterness and vexations that are hatched under the sweetest pleasures in the world, this one thing is enough, the multitude of diseases and pains, the variety of distempers, that those houses we are lodged in are exposed to. Poor creatures are oft-times tossed betwixt two, the fear of death, and the tediousness of life ; and under these fears, they cannot tell which to choose. Holy men are not exempted from some apprehensions of God's displeasure because of their sins ; and that may make them cry out with David, *O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.* Or, perhaps, this may be a desire, not so much simply for the prolonging of life, as for the intermitting of his pain, to have ease from the present smart. The extreme torment of some sickness, may draw the most fixed and confident spirits to cry out very earnestly for a little breathing. Or rather, if the words imply the desire of a recovery, and the spinning out of the thread of his life a little longer, surely he intended to employ it for God and His service. But long life was suitable to the promises of that time : so Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 5. There is no doubt those holy men under

the Law, knew somewhat of the state of immortality ; their calling themselves *strangers on earth* (Heb. xi. 13,) argued that they were no strangers to these thoughts. But it cannot be denied, that that doctrine was but darkly laid out in those times. It is Christ Jesus who *hath brought life and immortality to light*, who did illuminate life and immortality, which before stood in the dark.

Surely, the desire of life is, for the most part, sensual and base, when men desire that they may still enjoy their animal pleasures, and are loth to be parted from them. They are pleased to term it, a desire to live and repent ; and yet few do it when they are spared : like evil debtors, who desire forbearance from one term to another ; but with no design at all to pay. But there is a natural desire of life, something of abhorrence in nature against the dissolution of these tabernacles. We are loth to go forth, like children who are afraid to walk in the dark, not knowing what may be there. In some, such a desire of life may be very reasonable ; being surprised by sickness, and apprehensions of death, and sin unpardoned, they may desire a little time before they enter into eternity. For that change is not a thing to be hazarded upon a few days or hours' preparation. I will not say that death-bed repentance is altogether desperate, but certainly it is very dangerous, and to be suspected ; and, therefore, the desire of a little time longer, in such a case, may be very allowable.

I will not deny but it is possible, even for a believer, to be taken in such a posture, that it may be very uncomfortable to him to be carried off so, through the affrightments of death, and his darkness as to his after-state. On the other hand, it is an argument of a good measure of spirituality and height of the love of God, *to desire to depart, and be dissolved*, in the midst of health, and the affluence of worldly comforts. But for men to desire and wish to be dead, when they are troubled and vexed with anything, is but a childish folly, flowing from a discontented mind, which being over, they desire nothing less than to die. It is true there may be a natural desire of death, which at sometimes have shined in the spirits of some natural men : and there is much reason for it, not only to be freed from the evils and troubles of this life, but even from those things which many of this foolish world account their happiness,—sensual pleasures, to eat and drink, and to be hungry again, and still to round that same course which, to souls that are raised above sensual things, is burdensome and grievous.

But there is a spiritual desire of death, which is very becoming a Christian. For Jesus Christ hath not only opened very clearly the doctrine of eternal life, but He Himself hath passed through death, and lain down in the grave ; He hath perfumed that passage, and warmed that bed for us ; so that it is sweet and amiable for a Christian to pass through and follow Him, and to be

where He is. It is a strange thing, that the souls of Christians have not a continual desire to go to that company which is above ; (finding so much discord and disagreement among the best of men that are here ;) to go to *the spirits of just men made perfect*, where there is light, and love, and nothing else ; to go to the *company of angels*, a higher rank of blessed spirits ; but, most of all, to go to *God, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Testament*. And, to say nothing positively of that glory, (for the truth is, we can say nothing of it,) the very evils that death delivers the true Christian from, may make him long for it ; for such an one may say—I shall die, and go to a more excellent country, where I shall be happy forever : that is, I shall die no more, I shall sorrow no more, I shall be sick no more, and, which is yet more considerable, I shall doubt no more, and shall be tempted no more ; and, which is the chiefest of all, I shall sin no more.

Not slothful in Business. Rom. xii. 11.

These condensed rules have much in them ; and this one is very needful, for often a listless, indisposed weariness overtakes even good men : seeing so little to be done to any purpose, they are almost ready to give over all ; yet, they ought to bestir themselves, and apply to diligence in their place. Be not unduly stickling and busy in things improper, but enclosing thy diligence within thy sphere. Suffer it not to stand, but keep it there in motion. As to thy worldly affairs, be so diligent as to give them good despatch, when thou art about them, but have thy heart as little in them, as much disengaged as may be ; yet so acquitting them wisely, they shall trouble thee the less, when thou art in higher and better employments. As to thyself, be often examining thy heart and ways, striving constantly against sin ; though little sensible advantage be gained, yet, if thou yield, it will be worse ; if it prevail so much amidst all thy opposition, what would it do if thou shouldst sit still ! Use all holy means, how fruitless soever they seem for the present, and *wait on God*. *We have toiled all night*, said Simon, *and taken nothing*, Luke v. 5 : and yet, at his command, essaying again, they took more at once, than if, after their ordinary way, they had been taking all night. So as to others, give not up because thou seest no present success, but, in thy place, *admonish, exhort, and rebuke*, with all meekness and patience. Doth God wait on sinners, and wilt not thou wait a little for others ?

SELECTIONS  
FROM THE EXPOSITION OF THE CREED  
COMMONLY CALLED  
THE APOSTLES' CREED.

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1 Tim. iii. 9. Holding the mystery of Faith in a pure Conscience.

THE CREED.—I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell: the third day he rose again from the dead, he ascended into Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body: and the life everlasting.

You see clearly in these words a rich jewel, and a precious cabinet fit for it; *the mystery of faith* laid up and kept in a *pure conscience*. And these two are not only suitable, but inseparable, as we see in the first chapter of this Epistle, ver. 10: they are preserved and lost together, they suffer the same shipwreck; the casting away of the one, is the shipwreck of the other: if the one perish, the other cannot escape. Every believer is the temple of God; and as the tables of the Law were kept in the Ark, this *pure conscience* is the Ark that holds *the mystery of faith*. You think you are believers, you do not question that, and would take it ill that others should. It is very hard to convince men of unbelief, directly and in itself. But if you do believe this truth, that the only receptacle of saving faith, is, a purified conscience, then, I beseech you, question yourselves concerning *that*: being truly answered in it, it will resolve you touching your faith, which you are so loth to question in itself. Are your consciences pure? Have you a living hatred and antipathy against all impurity? Then, surely, faith is there; for it is the peculiar virtue of faith to *purify the heart*, (Acts xv. 9,) and the heart so purified, is the proper residence of faith, where it dwells and rests as in its natural place. But have you consciences that can lodge pride, and lust, and malice, and covetousness, and such like pollutions? Then, be no more so impudent as to say, you believe, nor deceive yourselves so far as to think you do. The blood of Christ never



speaks peace to any conscience but the same that it *purifies from dead works to serve the living God*. Heb. ix. 13, 14. As that blood is a sacrifice to appease God's wrath, so, it is a laver to wash our souls; and, to serve both ends, it is as was the blood of legal sacrifices, both offered up to God and sprinkled upon us, as both are expressed in the Apostle's words there. Do not think that God will throw this jewel of faith into a sty or kennel, a conscience full of defilement and uncleanness. Therefore, if you have any mind to these comforts and the peace that faith brings along with it, be careful to lodge it where it delights to dwell, *in a pure conscience*. Notwithstanding the unbelieving world mocks the name of *purity*, yet, study you, above all, that purity and holiness which may make your souls a fit abode for *faith*, and for that peace which it worketh, and for that Holy Spirit who works both in you.

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Remember, then, since we profess this faith, which is the proper seat of faith. Not our books, our tongues only, or memories, or judgment, but our conscience; and not our natural conscience defiled and stuffed with sin, but renewed and sanctified by grace. *Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.*

I believe in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.]

That sublime mystery is to be cautiously treated of, and rather humbly to be admired, than curiously dived into. The day will come, (truly *a day*, for here we are beset with the gloomy nightly shades of ignorance,) wherein we shall *see Him as He is*. 1 John iii. 2. In the mean time, let us devoutly worship Him, as He has revealed Himself to us, for this is the true way to that Heavenly country where we shall see Him face to face. And it is our interest here to believe the Trinity of persons in the Unity of the Godhead, and to trust in them as such: for this is the spring of all our hope, that the middle of the THREE became our Mediator, and the Holy Spirit our guide and teacher, and the Father reconciles us to Himself by the Son, and renews us by the Spirit.

Maker of Heaven and Earth.]

We make more bold to speak out our own questioning of the love and good-will of God, because we think we have some reason in that from our own unworthiness; but if we would sound our own hearts, we should often find in our distrust some secret doubtings of God's *power*, Psal. lxxviii. 19. *Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?* said they; though accustomed to miracles, yet still unbelieving. We think we are strongly enough persuaded of this, but our hearts deceive us. *Quæ scimus cum necesse non est, ea in necessitate nescimus*, says Bernard: The things which we seem to

know when it is not necessary for us to know them, we find, when necessary, that we know not. *The heart is deceitful.* Jer. xvii. 9—where he is speaking of trusting. It is not for nothing, that God by His prophets so often inculcates this doctrine of His power, and this great instance of it, the Creation, when He promises great deliverances to His Church, and the destruction of their enemies. See Isa. xlv. 12, and li. 12. What can be too hard for Him, who found it not too hard to make a world of nothing? If thou look on the public, the enemies of the Church are strong: if on thyself, thou hast indeed strong corruptions within, and strong temptations without: yet, none of these are almighty, as thy God is. What is it thou wouldst have done, that He cannot do if He think fit? And if He think it not fit, if thou art one of His children, thou wilt think with him; thou wilt reverence His wisdom, and rest satisfied with His will. This is believing indeed; the rolling all our desires and burdens over upon an almighty God. And where this is, it cannot choose but establish the heart in the midst of troubles, and give it a calm within in the midst of the greatest storms.

And try what other confidences you will, they shall prove vain and lying in the day of trouble. He that thinks to quiet his mind and find rest by worldly comfort, is, as Solomon compares his drunkard, *like one that lies down in the midst of the sea, or, that sleepeth on the top of a mast*: Prov. xxiii. 34, he can have but unsettled rest and repose, that lies there. *But he that trusteth in the Lord, is as Mount Sion that cannot be removed.* Psal. cxxv. 1. When we lean upon other props besides God, they prove broken reeds that not only fail, but pierce the hand that leans on them. Jer. xvii. 7.

There is yet another thing in this Article, which serves further to uphold our faith, That of necessity. He who made the world by His power, doth likewise rule it by His providence. It is so great a fabric as cannot be upheld and governed by any less power than that which made it. He did not frame this world, as the carpenter his ship, to put it into other hands and look no more after it; but as He made it, so He is the continual pilot of it, sits still at the helm, and guides it; yea, He commands the winds and seas, and they obey Him. And this serves much for the comfort of the godly, but I cannot here insist on it.

And in Jesus Christ.]

The two great works of God, by which He is known to us, are Creation and Redemption, which is a new or second creation. The Son of God, as God, was with the Father, as the worker of the former; but as God-man, He is the author of the latter. St. John begins his gospel with the first, and from that passes on to

the second. *In the beginning was The Word—by Him were all things made.* But at ver. 14, the other is expressed : *The Word was made flesh, and he dwelt among us,* had a tent like ours, and made of the same materials. He adds, *He was full of grace and truth ;* and for this end (as there follows,) *that we might all receive of his fulness, grace for grace.* And this is that great work of new creation. Therefore the prophet Isaiah, foretelling this great work from the Lord's own mouth, speaks of it in these terms, Chap. li. 16. *That I may plant the heavens and lay the foundation of the earth, and say unto Sion, Thou art my people.* That making of a new people to Himself in Christ, is as the framing of heaven and earth. Now this restoration by Jesus Christ, supposes the ruin and misery of man by his fall, that sin and death under which he is born. This we all seem to know, and acknowledge, and well we may, for we daily feel the woful fruits of that bitter root : but the truth is, the greatest part of us are not fully convinced, and therefore, do not consider this gulf of wretchedness into which we are fallen. If we were, there would be more cries amongst us for help to be drawn out and delivered from it : this great Deliverer, this Saviour would be of more use, and of more esteem with us. But I cannot now insist on that point.

Only consider, that this makes the necessity of a Mediator. The disunion and distance which sin hath made betwixt God and man, cannot be made up but by a Mediator, one to come betwixt ; so that there is now no believing in God the Father, but by this believing in Jesus his Son ; no appearing without horror, yea, without perdition, before so just a Judge highly offended, but by the intervention of so powerful a Reconciler, able to satisfy and appease Him. And He tells it us plainly and graciously, that we mistake not our way, *No man cometh unto the Father but by me.* John xiv. 6.

Few are our thoughts concerning God and returning to Him ; but if we have any, this is our unhappiness, that naturally we are subject to leave out Christ in them. We think there is something to be done : we talk of repentance, of prayer, and of amendment, though we have not these neither. But if we had these, there is yet one thing necessary above all these, which we forget ; there is absolute need of a Mediator to make our peace, and restore us into favor with God, One who must for that end do and suffer for us what we can neither do nor suffer. Though we could shed rivers of tears, they cannot wash out the stain of any one sin ; yea, there is some pollution in our very tears, so that they themselves have need to be washed in the blood of Jesus Christ.

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified.]

That he died, and what kind of death, you see, is expressed.

But as many particular sufferings of his body are not here mentioned, so none of those of his soul, but all are comprehended in this general word, *He suffered*. Those were too great to be duly expressed in so short a form, and therefore, are better expressed by supposing them, and including them only in this, *He suffered*. As he that drew the father, among others, beholding the sacrificing of his own daughter, signified the grief of the rest in their gestures, and visages, and tears, but drew the father veiled; so here, the crucifying and death of our Saviour are expressed, but the unspeakable conflicts of his soul are veiled under the general term of suffering. But surely, that invisible cup which came from his Father's hand, was far more bitter than the gall and vinegar from the hand of his enemies; the piercing of his soul, far sharper than the nails and thorns. He could answer these sweetly with *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*. But those other pangs drew from him another kind of word, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

*Died.*] No less would serve, and therefore he was *obedient even unto the death*, as the sentence against us did bear, and the sacrifices of the Law did prefigure. When the sacrifices drew back and went unwillingly to the place, the heathens accounted it an ill presage. Never was sacrifice more willing than Christ. *I lay down my life for my sheep*, says he, *and no man taketh it from me*. John x. 15, 18. *As a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth*. *He gave his back to the smiters*. Isa. liii. 7. *For this hour came I into the world*. John xviii. 37. And this his death is our life: though by it we are not freed from this temporal death, yet, which is infinitely more, we are delivered from eternal death, and which is yet more, entitled to eternal life; and therefore, do no more suffer this temporal death as a curse, but enjoy it as a blessing, and may look upon it now, (such as are in Christ, none other,) not only as a day of deliverance, but of coronation, the exchange of our present rags for long white robes, and a crown that fadeth not away.

*Buried.*] For the further assurance of his death, and glory of his resolution; as likewise, to commend the grave to us, as now a very sweet resting-place: he hath warmed the cold bed of the grave to a Christian, that he needs not fear to lie down in it, nor doubt that he shall rise again, as we know, and are after to hear that *He* did.

#### Reflections on Christ's sufferings.]

Refl. I. These are great things indeed which are spoken concerning Jesus Christ, his birth and sufferings; but the greater our unhappiness, if we have no portion in them. To hear of them only, and to enjoy nothing of them, is most miserable; and thus



it is through our unbelief. Were it as common to believe in him, as to repeat these words, or to come to church and hear this gospel preached, then you would all make pretty good plea on it. But believe it, it is another kind of thing to believe than all that, or than any thing that the most of us yet know. My brethren, do not deceive yourselves. That common highway faith will not serve; you are, for all that, still unbelievers in Christ's account; and if so, for all the riches of comfort that are in him, you can receive none from him. It is a sad word that he says, *Because ye believe not in me, ye shall die in your sins.* John viii. 21. As if he should say, Though I died for sins, not mine own but others, yet, your remaining in ungodliness and unbelief, that shall do you no good; ye shall die in your sins for all that. It is such a faith as endears Christ to the soul, unites it to him, makes Christ and it one, that makes all that is his to become ours. Then, we shall conclude aright, Christ hath suffered, therefore I shall not. As he said to them who came to take him, *Is it I you seek? Then let these go free;* so, to the Law and the justice of God, he says, seeing you have sought and laid hold on me, and made me suffer, let these go free who lay hold on me by faith: if you have anything to say to them, I am to answer for them, yea, I have done it already.

2. You that believe and live by this death, be often in reviewing it and meditating on it, that your souls may be ravished with the admiration of such love, and warmed with a reflex love to him. *Mira Dei dignitas, mira indignitas nostra.* Other wonders, as you say, last for a while, but this is a lasting wonder; not to the ignorant—the cause of wonder at other things is ignorance indeed, but this is an everlasting wonder to those who know it best, viz., to the very angels. Let that loved Jesus be fixed in your hearts, who was for you nailed to the cross: *Donec totus fixus in corde, qui totus fixus in cruce.* St. Bernard wonders that men should think on any thing else: *Quantæ insane post tanti Regis adventum aliis negotiis!* Surely it is great folly, to think and esteem much of any thing here, after his appearing: the sun arising drowns all the stars. And withal, be daily crucifying sin in yourselves, be avenged on it for his sake, and kill it because it killed him.

3. Will you think any thing hard to do or suffer for him, who undertook and performed to the full so much for you? If you had rather be your own than Christ's, much good do it you with yourselves; but know that if you are not Christ's, but your own, you must look for as little of him to be yours. If ye be your own, you must bear all your own sins, and all the wrath that is due to them. But if you like not that, and resolve to be no more your own, but Christ's, then what have you to do but cheerfully to embrace, yea, earnestly to seek all opportunities to do him service?

4. 'These are the steps of Christ's humiliation; look on them, then, so as to study to be like him particularly in that. Surely, the soul that hath most of Christ, hath most humility. It is the lesson he peculiarly recommends to us from his own example, which is the shortest and most effectual way of teaching: *Learn of me, for I meek and lowly of heart.* Matt. xi. 29. He became humble to expiate our pride, and yet we will not banish that pride which undid us, and follow that way of salvation which is humility. Jesus Christ is indeed the lily of the valleys; he grows no where but in the humble heart.

Rose again the third day.]

When humbled to the lowest, then nearest his exaltation, as Joseph in the prison. He could die, for he was a man, and a man for that purpose, that he might die; but he could not be overcome by death, for he was God: yea, by dying, he overcame death, and so shewed himself truly the Lord of life. He strangled that lion in his own den. The whale swallowed Jonah, but it could not digest him; it was forced to cast him up again at the appointed time, the same with the time here specified, wherein the prophet was a figure of this great Prophet, Jesus Christ. The grave hath a terrible appetite; it devours all, and still cries, *give, give, and never hath enough*, as Agur says; yet, for all its appetite, Christ was too great a morsel for it to digest, too strong a prisoner for all its bars and iron gates to keep him in. *It was impossible he should be holden of it*, says St. Peter. Acts. ii. 24.

He hath made a breach through death, opened up a passage on the other side of it into life, though otherwise, indeed, *vestigia nulla retrorsum*.\* They who believe, who lay hold on him by faith, they come through with him, follow him out at the same breach, pass through death into heaven. But the rest find not the passage out; it is as the Red Sea, passed only to the Israelites; therefore, they must of necessity sink quite downwards through the grave into hell, through the first death into the second, and that is the most terrible of all. *That death is indeed what one called the other, the most terrible of all terribles,—the king of terrors*, as it is in Job.

Now, the only assurance of that happy second resurrection to the life of glory hereafter is, the first resurrection here to the life of grace. *Blessed are they that are partakers of the first resurrection, for on such the second death hath no power.* Rev. xx. 6. For the resurrection of Jesus Christ is, to the believer, the evidence of his redemption completed, that all was paid by Christ, as our surety, and so, he set at liberty: which the Apostle teach-

\* There are no returning footsteps.

es us, when he says, *He arose for our righteousness*; and again, *It is God that justifies: who shall condemn? It is Christ that died, or rather that is risen again.* Rom. viii. 33. Nor is it only the pattern and pledge of a believer's resurrection, but it is the efficient cause both of that last resurrection of his body to glory, and of the first, of his soul to grace.

The life of a believer is derived and flows forth from Christ as his head, and is mystically one life with his, and therefore, as himself expresses it, *Because I live, ye shall live also.* John xiv. 19. Therefore is he called *the first begotten from the dead and the beginning.* Col. i. 18. He is first in all, and from him spring all those streams that *make glad the city of God.* Therefore the Apostle, in his thanksgiving for our new life and lively hopes, 1 Pet. i. 3, leaves not out that, *Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*; that is the conduit of all. And he expresses it in the same place, that we are *begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.* But, alas! we pre-judge ourselves of all that rich comfort that is wrapt up in this, by living to ourselves and our lusts, and to the world, having not our consciences purified from dead works. How few of us are there who set that ambition of Paul before us, desiring above all things *to know him, and the power of his resurrection, to be made conformable unto his death!* Phil. iii. 10. That is the knowledge, as he there expresses it, a lively experienced knowledge of that power.

This rightly considered, will answer all our doubts and fears in the Church's hardest times. When in its deliverance there appears nothing but impossibilities, when so low that its enemies are persured to conclude that it shall never rise again, and its friends are oppressed with fearing so much, yet, He who brought up his own Son Jesus from the dead, can and will restore His Church, for which He gave His only begotten Son to the death. *Son of man, says he, can these dry bones live?* Ezek. xxxii. 3. Thus often looks the Church's deliverance, which is there the proper sense. The prophet answered most wisely, *Lord, thou knowest, q. d.* It is a work only for Thee to know and to do; and by His Spirit they were revived. And so here, it looked hopeless as the disciples thought; they were at the point of giving it over, and blaming almost their former credulity: *We thought this should have been he that should have delivered Israel; and besides all this to-day is the third day.* True, the third day was come, but it was not yet ended; yea, he rose in the beginning of it, though they as yet knew it not, nor him to be present to whom they spake; but toward the end of it, they likewise knew that he was risen, when he was pleased to discover himself to them. Thus, though the enemies of the Church prevail so far against it, that it seems buried, and a stone laid at the grave's

mouth, yet, it shall rise again, and at the very fittest, the appointed time, as Christ the third day. Thus the Church expresses her confidence, Hos. vi. 2: *In the third day he will raise us up.* Whatsoever it suffers, it shall gain by it, and be more beautiful and glorious in its restoration.

He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father.]

In sum, believers have, in this ascending and enthroning of Christ, unspeakable comfort through their interest in Christ, both in consideration of his present affection to them, and his effectual intercession for them, and in the assured hope which this gives them of their own after happiness and glory with him.

First, In all his glory he forgets them not. He puts not off his bowels with his low condition here, but hath carried it along to his throne. *Bone conveniunt, et in una sede morantur, majestas et amor.* His majesty and love suit very well, and both in their highest degree. As all the waters of his sufferings did not quench his love, nor left he it behind him buried in the grave, but it arose with him, being stronger than death; so, he let it not fall to the earth when he ascended on high, but it ascended with him, and he still retains it in his glory. And that our flesh which he assumed on earth, he took up into Heaven, as a token of indissoluble love betwixt him and those whom he redeemed, and sends down from thence as the rich token of his love, his Spirit into their hearts; so that these are mutual remembrances. Can he forget his own on earth, having their flesh so closely united to him? You see he does not; he feels what they suffer. *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?* And can they forget him whose Spirit dwells in them, and records lively to their hearts the passages of his love, and brings all those things to their remembrance, (as himself tells us, that Spirit would do,) and so proves indeed THE COMFORTER, by representing unto us that his love, the spring of our comforts? And when we send up our requests, we know of a friend before us there, a most true and a most faithful friend, who fails not to speak for us what we say, and much more. *He liveth,* says the Apostle, *to make intercession for us.* Heb. vii. 25. This is the ground of a Christian's boldness at the throne of grace: yea, therefore is the Father's throne the throne of grace to us, because the throne of our Mediator, Jesus Christ, is beside it: he sits at His right hand, otherwise it could be nothing to us but a throne of justice, and so, in regard of our guiltiness, a throne of terror and affrightment, which we would rather flee from, than draw near unto.

Lastly, as we have the comfort of such a friend, to prepare access to our prayers there, which are the messengers of our souls,



so, of this, that our souls themselves, when they remove from these houses of clay, shall find admission there through him. And this he tells his disciples again and again, and in them all his own, that their interest was so much in his ascending to his glory : *I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there ye may be also.* John xiv. 3.

It will not be hard to persuade them who believe these things, and are portioners in them, to set their hearts on them, and, for that end, to take them off from all other things as unworthy of them : yea, it will be impossible for them to live without the frequent and sweet thoughts of that place where the Lord Jesus is. Yet, it is often needful to remind them that this cannot be enough done, and, by representing these things to them, to draw them more upwards. And it is best done in the Apostle's words : *If ye be risen with Christ, mind those things that are above, where he sits, &c.* Col. iii. 1. If ye be risen with him, follow him on, let your hearts be where He is. They that are one with him, the blessed Seed of the woman, do find that unity drawing them Heaven-wards. But, alas ! the most of us are like the accursed seed of the serpent, basely grovelling on this earth, and licking the dust. The conversation of the believer is in Heaven, where he hath a Saviour, and from whence he looks for him. Truly, there is little of a true Christian here ; (and that argues that there is little of the truth of Christianity among us, who are altogether here ;) his head in Heaven, and his heart there, and these are the two principles of Life. Let us then suit the Apostles advice, and so enjoy the comfort he subjoins, that by our affections being above, we may know, that *our life is hid with Christ in God*, and therefore, that *when He, who is our life, shall appear, we likewise shall appear with Him in glory.*

From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.]

If we be persuaded that there is a Supreme Ruler of the world, who is most wise, and just, and good, this will persuade us, not only that there is some other estate and being than that we see here, appointed for man, the most excellent, the reasonable part of this visible world ; but that there shall be a solemn judicial proceeding, in entering and instating him in that after-being. The many miseries of this present life, and that the best of men are usually deepest sharers in them, though it hath a little staggered, not only wise heathens, but sometimes some of the prime saints of God, yet, it hath never prevailed with any but brutal and debauched spirits, to conclude against Divine providence, but rather to resolve upon this, that of necessity there must be another kind of issue, a final catastrophe, reducing all the present confusions into order, and making odds even, as you say. It is true, that some-

times here, the Lord's right hand finds out His enemies, and is known by the judgment which he executes on them; and, on the other side, He gives some instances of His gracious providence to His Church, and to particular godly men, even before the sons of men; but these are but some few preludes and pledges of that great Judgment. Some he gives, that we forget not His justice and goodness; but much is reserved, that we expect not all, nor the most, here, but hereafter. And it is certainly most congruous, that this be done, not only in each particular apart, but most conspicuously in all together, that the justice and mercy of God may not only be accomplished, but acknowledged and magnified, and that, not only severally in the several persons of men and angels, but universally, jointly, and manifestly in the view of all, as upon one theatre, angels and men being at once, some of them the objects of that justice, others of mercy, but all of them spectators of both. Each ungodly man shall not only read, whether he will or no, the justice of God in himself and his own condemnation, which most of them shall do before that time their soul's particular judgment; but they shall then see the same justice in all the rest of the condemned world, and the rest, in them; and, to the great increase of their anguish, they shall see likewise the glory of that mercy which shall then shine so bright in all the elect of God, from which they themselves are justly shut out, and delivered up to eternal misery. And, on the other side, the godly shall with unspeakable joy behold, not only a part, as before, but the whole sphere both of the justice and mercy of their God, and shall with one voice admire and applaud Him in both.

Besides, the process of many men's actions, cannot be full at the end of their life, as it shall be at that day: many have very large after-reckonings to come upon them for those sins of others to which they are accessory, though committed after their death; as the sins of ill-educated children to be laid to the charge of their parents, the sins of such as any have corrupted, either by their counsels, or opinions, or evil examples, &c.

2. HE, the Lord Jesus, shall be Judge in that great day. The Father, and Spirit, and His authority, are all one, for they are all one God and one Judge; but it shall be particularly exercised and pronounced by our Saviour, God-man, *Jesus Christ*. That eternal Word by whom all things were made, by *Him* all shall be judged; and so, he shall be THE WORD in that last act of time, as in the first. He shall judicially pronounce that great and final sentence which shall stand unalterable in eternity; and not only as the eternal Son of God, but withal as the Son of Man, and so shall he sit as king, and invested with all power in Heaven and earth. *By that man whom He hath appointed to judge the quick and the dead.—The same Jesus shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.* Acts xvii, 31; i. 11. The powers

of the world and of hell are combined against his throne; therefore, they shall be his footstool sitting on that throne. And the crown which he hath purchased for believers, he shall set it on their heads with his own hand. This shall be exceeding joy and comfort, to all that have believed on him, that their Redeemer shall be their Judge. He who was judged for them, shall judge them, and pass sentence according to that covenant of grace which holds in him, pronouncing them free from the wrath which he himself endured for them, and heirs of that life which he bought with his dearest blood.

And that gives no less accession to the misery of the wicked, that the same Jesus whom they opposed and despised, so many of them as heard any thing of him, He shall sit upon their final judgment, and pronounce sentence against them, not partially avenging his own quarrel on them,—no word of that,—but most justly returning them the reward of their ungodliness and unbelief. That great Shepherd shall thus make that great separation of his sheep from the goats.

3. Of the manner, we have thus much here, that He shall come from heaven as the Scriptures teach us, He shall visibly appear in the air; He shall come *in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*, Matt. xxiv. 30, attended with innumerable companies of glorious angels who shall serve him, both in the congregating of his elect, and in separating of them from the reprobate; but Himself, in the brightness of his own majesty, infinitely surpassing them all. 2 Thess. i. 7: *In flaming fire*. His first coming was mean and obscure, suiting his errand, for then he came to be judged; but that last coming shall be glorious, for he comes to judge, and his judgment shall be *in righteousness*, Acts xvii. 31. *Iuste judicabit qui injuste judicatus est.* [AUGUSTINE.] There shall be no mis-alleging, or mis-proving, or mis-judging there. All the judgments of men, whether private or judicial, shall be rejudged there according to truth, by such a Judge before whom all things are naked. And not only shall He know and judge all aright, but all they who are judged, shall themselves be convinced that it is so. Then all will see that none are condemned but most deservedly, and that the Lord's justice is pure and spotless in them who perish, as his grace is without prejudice to his justice, it being satisfied in Christ for them who are saved. The Books shall be opened, those which men so willingly, the most of them, keep shut and clasped up, and are so unwilling to look into, their own accusing consciences; the Lord will proceed formally against the wicked according to the Books: no wrong shall be done them, they shall have fair justice, and they shall see what they would not look upon before, when by seeing, that might have been blotted out, and a free acquittance written in its stead. And *that* the believer shall read in his conscience at that day, which through

the dimness of faith, and the dark, troubled estate of his soul, he many times could not read here below.

We are gaping still after new notions, but a few things wisely and practically known, drawn down from the head into the heart, are better than all that variety of knowing that men are so taken up with. *Paucis literis opus est ad mentem bonam.* This and such like common truths, we think we both know and believe well enough; but truly, if this great point, touching the great and last judgment, were indeed known and believed by us, it would draw our minds to more frequent and more deep thoughts of it; and were we often and serious in those thoughts, they would have such influence into all our other thoughts, and the whole course of our lives, as would much alter the frame of them from what they are. Did we think of this Gospel which we preach and hear, that we must then be judged by it, we should be now more ruled by it. But the truth is, we are willingly forgetful of these things; they are melancholy pensive thoughts, and we are content that the noise of affairs or any vanities fill the ears of our minds, that we hear them not. If we be forced at some times to hear of this last judgment to come, it possibly casts out conscience into some little trembling fit for the time, as it did Felix; but he was not, nor are we, so happy as to be shaken out of the custom and love of sin by it. We promise it fair, as he did, some other time; but if that time never come, this day will come, and they who shun to hear or think of it, shall then see it, and the sight of it will be as terrible and amazing, as the timely thoughts of it would have been profitable. It is, no doubt, an displeasing subject to all ungodly, earthly minds; but surely, it were our wisdom to be of that mind now, that then we shall be forced to be of: we shall then read, by the light of that fire which shall burn the world, the vanity of all those things whereon we now dote so foolishly. Let us therefore be persuaded to think so now, and disengage our hearts, and fix them on him who shall then judge us. *Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. They only are happy who trust in him.* That which is the affrightment of others, is their great joy and desire; they love and long for that day, both for their Saviour's glory in it, and their own full happiness; and that their *love to his appearing*, is to them a certain pledge of the *crown* they are to receive at his appearing. 2 Tim. iv. 8:—*at that day*, says the Apostle. This day he esteems more of than all his days; therefore, he names it no otherwise, than *that day*. How may we know what day it was he meant? His coronation-day. But of all men, surely, the hypocrite likes least the mention and remembrance of that day: there is no room for disguises there, all masks must off, and all things appear just as they are, and that is the worst news to him that can be.



## The communion of Saints.]

This springs immediately from the former: if they make one Church, then they have a very near communion together. They are one body united to that glorious Head that is above; they have all one spiritual life flowing from him. And this communion holds not only on earth and in heaven apart, but even betwixt heaven and earth: the saints on earth make up the same body with those already in glory; they are born to the same inheritance by new birth, though the others are entered in possession before them. This their common title to spiritual blessings, and eternal blessings prejudices none of them: their inheritance is such as is not lessened by the multitude of heirs: it is entire to each one. And that grace and salvation that flows from Christ, *the Sun of Righteousness*, is as the light of the sun where it shines; none hath the less because of others partaking of it. The happiness of the saints is called *an inheritance in light*, which all may enjoy without abatement to any. They have each one their crown: they need not, they do not envy one another, nor, *Ottoman-like*, one brother to kill another to reign alone. Yea, they rejoice in the happiness and salvation of one another; they are glad at the graces which God bestows on their brethren; for they know that they all belong to the same first owner, and return to His glory, and that whatsoever diversity is in them, they all agree and concentre in that service and good of the Church; and so, what each one hath of gifts and graces, belongs to all by virtue of this communion. Thus ought each of them to think, and every one of them humbly and charitably so to use what he hath himself, and ingenuously to rejoice in that which others have, as the Apostle reasons at large, 1 Cor. xii.

## Forgiveness of Sins.]

Notwithstanding forgiveness of sins, there is a necessity of holiness; though not as meriting it, yet, as leading unto happiness. But on the other side, notwithstanding the highest point of holiness we can attain, there is a necessity of this forgiveness of sins. Though believers make up a holy Church and company of saints, yet, there is a debt upon them that their holiness pays not; yea, they are so far from having a surplus for a standing treasure after all is paid, that all the holiness of the saints together will not pay the least farthing of that debt they owe. *As for me, I will walk in mine integrity*, says David, Psal. xxvi. 11. How then? Adds he, This shall justify me sufficiently? No, but *Redeem Thou me, and be merciful to me*. So, 1 John i. 6: *If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie*. And yet, in the next verse, though we do *walk in the light*, yet is there need of

the blood of Jesus Christ, to cleanse us from all sin; and so throughout the Scriptures. All the integrity of the godly under the Law, did not exempt them from offering sacrifice, which was the expiation of sin in the figure, looking forward to that great and spotless Sacrifice that was to be slain for the sins of the world. And those who believe the Gospel, the application of that justifying blood that streams forth in the doctrine of the Gospel, is not only needful to wash in for their cleansing in their first conversion, but is to be re-applied to the soul, for taking off the daily contracted guiltiness of new sins. It is a fountain opened and standing open for sin and for uncleanness, as that sea of brass before the sanctuary. They that are clean have still need of washing, at least, their feet, as Christ speaks to St. Peter, John xiii. 10.

The consideration of that precious blood shed for our sins, is the strongest persuasive to holiness, and to the avoiding and hating of sin. So far is the doctrine of justification, rightly understood, from animating men to sin. But because of the woful continuance of sin in the godly, while they continue in this region of sin and death, therefore is there a continual necessity of new recourse to this great expiation. Thus St. John joins these two, 1 Eph. ii. 1, 2: *These things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins.*

You think it an easy matter, and a thing that for your own ease you willingly believe, the forgiveness of sins. It is easy indeed, after our fashion; easy to imagine that we believe such a thing when we hear it, because we let it pass and question it not; we think it may be true, and think no further on it, while we neither know truly what sin is, nor feel the weight of our own sins. But where a soul is convinced of the nature of sin, and its own guiltiness, there to believe forgiveness is not so easy a task.

In believing this forgiveness of sins, and so, the other privileges that attend it, there be these three things gradually leading one to the other. 1. To believe that there is such a thing, and that it is purchased by the death of Christ, and so attainable by coming unto him for it. 2. By this, the soul finding itself ready to sink under the burden of its own sins, is persuaded to go to him, and lay over that load on him; and itself withal resolves to rest on him for this forgiveness. This is to believe in him *who is the Lord our righteousness*. 3. Upon this believing on him for forgiveness, follows a reflex believing of that forgiveness; not continually and inseparably, especially if we take the degree of assurance somewhat high, but yet, in itself, it is apt to follow, and often, in God's gracious dispensation, doth follow upon that former act of believing, through the clearness and strength of faith in the soul, and sometimes withal, is backed with an express, peculiar testimony of God's own Spirit. To believe, and to grow stronger in believing,

and to aspire to the assurance of faith, is our constant duty : but that immediate testimony of the Spirit, is an arbitrary beam that God reserves in His own hand, yet, such a gift as we may not only lawfully seek, but do foolishly prejudice ourselves and slight it, if we neglect to seek it, and want so rich a blessing for want of asking, and withal, laboring to keep our hearts in a due disposition and frame for entertaining it. The keeping of our consciences pure, as much as may be, doth not only keep the comfortable evidence of pardon clearest and least interrupted within us, but is the likeliest to receive those pure joys which flow immediately into the soul from the Spirit of God. The testimony of our conscience is, if we damp it not ourselves, our *continual feast* ; but that testimony of the Spirit is a superadded taste of higher comfort out of God's own hand, as it were a piece of Heaven in the soul, which He sometimes cheers it withal, where He hath first given much love and ardent desires after Himself : they are short of that light, in the fulness whereof we hope to dwell hereafter. But besides that God is most free in that particular, and knows what is fittest for us, the greatest part even of true Christians yet do not so walk, nor attend to that spiritualness that is capable of such visits.

The destruction of the body.]

Our bodies are raised, which were companions and partakers of our good and evil in our abode upon earth, that they may in eternity be companions and partakers of our reward. Those of the ungodly, to suit their condemned souls, shall be filled with shame, and vileness, and misery : and those that were, in their lower estate here, temples of the Holy Ghost, shall be filled with that fulness of joy that shall run over from the soul unto them : they shall be conformable to the happy and glorious souls to which they shall be united, yea, to the glorious body of our Lord Jesus Christ. There shall then be nothing but beauty, and glory, and immortality, in them which are now frail and mortal, and being dead, do putrefy and turn to dust. *He shall change our vile bodies, and make them like unto his most glorious body.* Phil. iii. 21. But, as St. Bernard says well, If we would be sure of this, that our bodies shall be conformed to his in the glory to come, let us see that our souls be here conformed to his, in that humility which he so much manifested whilst he dwelt among men : if we would that then our vile body be made like his glorious body, let our proud heart now be made like his humble heart.

Life eternal.]

Our Confession of faith ends in that which is *the end of our*

*faith*, our everlasting salvation, or eternal life. Of which, all that we can say is but stammering, and all our knowledge and conceiting of it but ignorance, in regard of what it is: yet, so much we know, or may know of it, as, if we knew aright, would certainly draw us more into the desires and pursuits of it. The very name of life is sweet, but then especially as it is here meant, in the purest and sweetest sense, for a truly happy life. *Non est vivere, sed valere, vita.* For a life full of misery is scarcely worth the name of life, and the longer it were, the worse; therefore, the miserable estate of damned souls, though immortal in it, is called *death*. So then, by this *life*, true and full blessedness being meant, and then, that added, that it is *eternal* life, what can be imagined more to make it desirable? So happy, that there shall not be the smallest drop of any evil or bitterness in it, pure unmixed bliss; nothing present in it that is displeasing, nor any thing wanting that is delightful; and *everlasting*, that when millions of years (if there were any such reckoning there) are rolled about, it shall be as far from ending as at the first.

A very little knowledge of this blessed life, would make us clean out of love with the life that now we make such account of. What can it be that ties us here? The known shortness of this life, were it more happy than it is to any, might make it of less esteem with us. But then withal, being so full of miseries and sins, so stuffed with sorrows round about us, and within ourselves, that if the longest of it can be called long, it is only the multitude of miseries in it, that can challenge that name for it. Such a world of bodily diseases, here one's head paining him, another his stomach: some complaining of this part, some of that, and the same party sometimes of one malady, sometimes of another; what disappointments, and disgraces, and cross encounters of affairs; what personal and what public calamities; and then, sin, the worst of all! And yet, all cannot wean us! We cannot endure to hear nor to think of removing; and the true reason is, unbelief of this eternal life, and the neglect of those ways that lead to it. Be persuaded at length to call in your heart from the foolish chase of vanity, and consider this glorious life that is set before you. Do you think the provision you make for this wretched present life, worth so many hours' daily pains, and give eternal life scarcely half a thought in many hours, possibly not a fixed, serious thought in many days? Surely, if you believe there is such a thing, you cannot but be convinced that it is a most preposterous, unwise course you take, in the expense of your time and pains upon any thing else more than on life eternal. Think what a sad thing it will be, when your soul must remove out of that little cottage wherein it now dwells, not to be bettered by the removal, but thrust out into utter darkness. Whereas, if ye would give up with sin, and embrace Jesus Christ as your joy and your life, in him



you would presently be put into a sure, unfailing right to this eternal life. It is a pure life, and purity of life here, is the only way to it *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

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## SELECTIONS FROM THE THEOLOGICAL LECTURES.

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### From the Introduction.

It is not my intention to perplex you with curious questions, and lead you through the thorny paths of disputation; but, if I had any share of that excellent art, it would be my delight to direct your way, through the easy and pleasant paths of righteousness, to a life of endless felicity, and be myself your companion in that blessed pursuit. I would take pleasure to kindle in your souls the most ardent desires, and fervent love of heavenly things; and to use the expression of a great divine, add "wings to your souls, to snatch them away from this world, and restore them to God." For, if I may be allowed to speak with freedom, most part of the notions that are treated of in theological schools, that are taught with great pomp and ostentation, and disputed with vast bustle and noise, may possibly have the sharpness of thorns; but they have also their barrenness: they may prick and tear, but they can afford no solid nourishment to the minds of men. *No man ever gathered grapes off thorns, nor figs off thistles.* "To what purpose," saith A. Kempis, "dost thou reason profoundly concerning the Trinity, if thou art without humility, and thereby displeasest that Trinity?" And St. Augustine, upon the words of Isaiah, *I am the Lord that teacheth thee to profit*, observes with great propriety, that the Prophet here mentions utility in opposition to subtilty. Such are the principles I would wish to communicate to you; and it is my earnest desire and fervent prayer, that while I, according to my measure of strength, propose them to your understanding, He who sits in Heaven, yet condescends to instruct the hearts of men on this earth, may effectually impress them upon your minds.

But that you may be capable of this supernatural light and heavenly instruction, it is, first of all, absolutely necessary, that your minds be called off from foreign objects; and turned in upon themselves; for, as long as your thoughts are dispersed and scattered in pursuit of vanity and insignificant trifles, he that would

lay before them the principles and precepts of this spiritual wisdom, would commit them, like the sibyl's prophecies, that were written on loose leaves of trees, to the mercy of the inconstant winds, and thereby render them entirely useless. It is certainly a matter of great difficulty, and requires uncommon art, to fix the thoughts of men, especially young men and boys, and turn them in upon themselves. We read in the parable of the Gospel concerning the prodigal son, that, first of all, *he came to himself*, and then returned to his father. It is certainly a very considerable step towards conversion to God, to have the mind fixed upon itself, and disposed to think seriously of its own immediate concerns; which the pious St. Bernard excellently expresses in this prayer: "May I," says he, "return from external objects to my own inward concerns, and from inferior objects rise to those of a superior nature." I shall look upon it as no small happiness, if, out of this whole society, I could but gain one, but wish earnestly I could prevail with many, and still more ardently that I could send you all away, fully determined to entertain more serious and secret thoughts than ever you had before, with regard to your immortal state and eternal concerns. But how vain are the thoughts of men! What a darkness overclouds their minds! It is the great complaint of God concerning His people, that *they have not a heart to understand*. It is at once the great disgrace and misery of mankind, that they live without forethought. That brutish thoughtlessness, pardon the expression, or, to speak more intelligibly, want of consideration, is the death and ruin of souls. And the ancients observe, with great truth and justice, "that a thoughtful mind is the spring and source of every good thing."

It is the advice of the Psalmist, that we should *converse much with ourselves*: an advice, indeed, which is regarded by few; for the greatest part of mankind are no where greater strangers than at home. But it is my earnest request to you, that you would be intimately acquainted with yourselves, and as becomes persons devoted to a studious life, be much at home, much in your own company, and very often engaged in serious conversation with yourselves. Think gravely, To what purpose do I live? Whither am I going? Ask thyself, hast thou any fixed and determined purpose, any end that thou pursuest with steadfastness? The principles I have embraced under the name of the Christian Religion, the things I have so often heard about a future state and life, and death eternal, are they true or false? If they are true, as we all absolutely profess to believe they are, then, to be sure, the greatest and most important matters of this world are vain and even less than vanity itself: all our knowledge is but ignorance, our riches poverty, our pleasure bitterness, and our honors vile and dishonorable. How little do those men know, who are ambitious of glory, what it really is, and how to be attained! Nay,

they eagerly catch at the empty shadow of it, while they avoid and turn their backs upon that glory which is real, substantial, and everlasting. The happiness of good men in the life to come, is not only infinitely above all our expressions, but even beyond our most enlarged thoughts. By comparing, however, great things with small, we attain some faint notion of these exalted and invisible blessings, from the earthly and visible enjoyment of this world. In this respect, even the Holy Scriptures descend to the weakness of our capacities, and as the Hebrews express it, "The law of God speaks the language of the children of men." They speak of this celestial life, under the representations of an heritage, of riches, of a kingdom, and a crown, but with uncommon epithets, and such as are by no means applicable to any earthly glory or opulence, however great. It is *an inheritance*, but one that is *uncorrupted, undefiled, and that fadeth not away*; a *kingdom*, but *one that can never be shaken*, much less ruined; which can never be said of the thrones of this sublunary world, as evidently appears from the histories of all nations, and our own recent experience. Here, ye sons of Adam, a covetous and ambitious race, here is room for a laudable avarice; here are motives to excite your ambition, and, at the same time, the means of satisfying it to the full. But it must be acknowledged, that the belief of these things is far from being common. What a rare attainment is faith, seeing that among the prodigious crowds of those who profess to believe in this world, one might justly cry out, Where is a true believer to be found? That man shall never persuade me, that he believes the truth and certainty of heavenly enjoyments, who cleaves to this earth, nay, who does not scorn and despise it, with all its baits and allurements, and employ all his powers, as well as his utmost industry, to obtain these immense and eternal blessings.

Nor is there any thing in the way to these enjoyments that can deter you from it, unless holiness in heart and life appear to be a heavy and troublesome task to you: whereas, on the contrary, nothing surely can be named, that is either more suited to the dignity of human nature, more beautiful and becoming, or attended with greater pleasure. I therefore beseech and entreat you, by the bowels of Divine mercy, and by your own most precious souls, that you would seriously consider these things, and make them your principal study. Try an experiment, attended with no danger or expense; make a trial of the ways of this wisdom, and I doubt not but you will be so charmed with the pleasantness thereof, that you will never thenceforward depart from them. For this purpose, I earnestly recommend to you, to be constant and assiduous in prayer. Nay, it is St. Paul's exhortation, that you *pray without ceasing*. 1 Thes. v. 17. So that prayer may be, not only, according to the old saying, *Clavis diei, et sera noctis*,



The key that opens the day, and the lock that shuts up the night ; but also, so to speak, a staff for support in the day-time, and a bed for rest and comfort in the night ; two conveniences which are commonly expressed by one single Hebrew word. And be assured, that the more frequently you pray, with so much the greater ease and pleasure will your prayers be attended, not only from the common and necessary connexion between acts and habits, but also from the nature of this duty. For prayer, being a kind of conversation with God, gradually purifies the soul, and makes it continually more and more like unto Him. Our love of God is also very much improved by this frequent intercourse with Him ; and by His love, on the other hand, the soul is effectually disposed to fervency, as well as frequently in prayer, and can, by no means, subsist without it.

#### Study of the Scriptures.

I exhort and beseech you, never to suffer so much as one day to pass, either through lazy negligence or too much eagerness in inferior studies, without reading some part of the sacred records with a pious and attentive disposition of mind ; still joining with your reading, fervent prayer, that you may thereby draw down that Divine light, without which spiritual things cannot be read and understood. But with this light shining upon them, it is not possible to express how much sweeter you will find these inspired writings, than Cicero, Demosthenes, Homer, Aristotle, and all the other orators, poets, and philosophers. They reason about an imaginary felicity, and every one in his own way advances some precarious and uncertain thoughts upon it ; but *this* Book alone shows clearly, and with absolute certainty, what it is, and points out the way that leads to the attainment of it. This is that which prevailed with St. Augustine to study the Scriptures, and engaged his affection to them. "In Cicero, and Plato, and other such writers," says he, "I meet with many things wittily said, and things that have a moderate tendency to move the passions ; but in none of them do I find these words, *Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*"

Human Felicity nowhere to be found in earthly things.

The proposition is, That human felicity, or that full and complete good that is suited to the nature of man, is not to be found in the earth, nor in earthly things.

Now, what if, instead of further proof or illustration, I should only say—If this perfect felicity is to be found within this visible world, or the verge of this earthly life, let him, I pray, who hath found it out, stand forth ; let him tell who can, what star, of what-



ever magnitude, what constellation or combination of stars, has so favorable an aspect, and so benign an influence, or what is that singular good, or assemblage of good things in this earth, that can confer upon mankind a happy life. All things that, like bright stars, have hitherto attracted the eyes of men, vanishing in a few days, have proved themselves to be comets, not only of no benign, but even of pernicious influence: according to the saying, "There is no comet but what brings some mischief along with it." All that have ever lived during so many ages that the world has hitherto lasted, noble and ignoble, learned and unlearned, fools and wise men, have gone in search of happiness: has ever any one of them all, in times past, or is there any one at this day that has said, I have found it? Different men have given different definitions and descriptions of it, and according to their various turns of mind, have painted it in a great variety of shapes; but, since the creation of the world, there has not been so much as one who ever pretended to say, Here it is, I have it, and have attained the full possession of it. Even those from whom most was to be expected, men of the utmost penetration, and most properly qualified for such researches, after all their labor and industry, have acknowledged their disappointment, and that they had not found it. But it would be wonderful indeed, that there should be any good suited to human nature, and to which mankind were born, and yet that it never fell to the share of any one individual of the sons of men: unless it be said, that the things of life, in this respect, resemble the speculations of the schools; and that, as they talk about objects of knowledge that were never known, so there is some good attainable by men, which was never actually attained.

But to look a little more narrowly into this matter, and take a transient view of the several periods of life. Infants are so far from attaining to happiness, that they have not yet arrived at human life; yet, if they are compared with those of riper years, they are in a low and improper sense, with regard to two things, innocence and ignorance, happier than men; for there is nothing that years add to infancy so invariably, and in so great abundance, as guilt and pollution; and the experience and knowledge of the world which they give us, do not so much improve the head, as they vex and distress the heart. So that the great man represented in the tragedy embracing his infant who knew nothing of his own misery, seems to have had some reason to say, "That those who know nothing enjoy the happiest life." And to be sure, what we gain by our progress from infancy to youth, is, that we thereby become more exposed to the miseries of life, and, as we improve in the knowledge of things, our pains and torments are also increased: for either children are put to servile employments, or mechanic arts; or if they happen to have a more genteel and liberal education, this very thing turns to a punishment, as they

are thereby subjected to rods and chastisements, and the power of parents and instructors, which is often a kind of petty tyranny; and, when the yoke is lightened with the greatest prudence, it still seems hard to be borne, as it is above the capacity of their young minds, thwarts their wishes and inclinations, and encroaches upon their beloved liberty.

Youth, put in full possession of this liberty, for the most part ceases to be master of itself; nor can it be truly said to be delivered from its former misery, as to exchange it for a worse, even that very liberty. It leaves the harbor to sail through quicksands and Sirens; and when both these are passed, launches out into the deep sea. Alas! to what various fates is it there exposed! How many contrary winds does it meet with! How many storms threatening it with shipwreck! How many shocks has it to bear from avarice, ambition, and envy, either in consequence of the violent stirrings of those passions within itself, or the fierce attacks of them from without! Amidst all these tempests, the ship is either early overwhelmed, or broken by storms; and worn out by old age, at last falls to pieces.

Nor does it much signify what state of life one enters into, or what rank he holds in human society; for all forms of business and conditions of life, however various you may suppose them to be, are exposed to a much greater variety of troubles and distresses, some to pressures more numerous and more grievous than others, but all to a great many, and every one to some peculiar to itself. If you devote yourself to ease and retirement, you cannot avoid the reproach and uneasiness that constantly attend an indolent, a useless, and lazy life. If you engage in business, whatever it be, whether you commence merchant, soldier, farmer, or lawyer, you always meet with toil and hazard, and often with heavy misfortunes and losses. Celibacy exposes to solitude; marriage, to solicitude and cares. Without learning, you appear plain and unpolished; but on the other hand, the study of letters is a matter of immense labor, and, for the most part, brings in but very little, either with regard to the knowledge you acquire by it, or the conveniences of life it procures. But I will enlarge no further. You find the Greek and Latin poets lamenting the calamities of life in many parts of their works, and at great length: nor do they exaggerate in the least; they even fall short of the truth, and only enumerate a few evils out of many.

The Greek epigram ascribed by some to Prosidipus, by others to Crates the Cynic philosopher, begins thus, "What state of life ought one to choose?" and having enumerated them all, concludes in this manner: "There are then only two things eligible, either never to have been born, or to die as soon as one makes his appearance in the world."

But now, leaving the various periods and conditions of life, let

us, with great brevity, run over those things which are looked upon to be the greatest blessings in it, and see whether any of them can make it completely happy. Can this be expected from a beautiful outside? No; this has rendered many miserable, but never made one happy. For suppose it to be sometimes attended with innocence, it is surely of a fading and perishing nature, "the sport of time or disease." Can it be expected from riches? Surely no; for how little of them does the owner possess, even supposing his wealth to be ever so great! What a small part of them does he use or enjoy himself! And what has he of the rest but the pleasure of seeing them with his eyes? Let his table be loaded with the greatest variety of delicious dishes, he fills his belly out of one; and if he has a hundred beds he lies but in one of them. Can the kingdoms, thrones, and sceptres of this world, confer happiness? No: we learn from the histories of all ages, that not a few have been tumbled down from these by sudden and unexpected revolutions, and those not such as were void of conduct or courage, but men of great and extraordinary abilities. And that those who met with no such misfortunes, were still far enough from happiness, is very plain from the situation of their affairs, and in many cases, from their own confession. The saying of Augustus is well known: "I wish I had never been married and had died childless." And the expression of Severus at his death, "I became all things, and yet it does not profit me." But the most noted saying of all, and that which best deserves to be known, is that of the wisest and most flourishing king, as well as the greatest preacher, who, having exactly computed all the advantages of his exalted dignity and royal opulence, found this to be the sum total of all, and left it on record for the inspection of posterity and future ages, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.*

All this may possibly be true with regard to the external advantages of men; but may not happiness be found in the internal goods of the mind, such as wisdom and virtue? Suppose this granted; still that they may confer perfect felicity, they must of necessity be perfect themselves. Now, shew me the man, who, even in his own judgment, has attained to perfection in wisdom and virtue: even those who were accounted the wisest, and actually were so, acknowledged they knew nothing! nor was there one among the most approved philosophers, whose virtues were not allayed with many blemishes. The same must be said of piety and true religion, which, though it is the beginning of felicity, and tends directly to perfection, yet, as in this earth it is not full and complete in itself, it cannot make its possessors perfectly happy. The knowledge of the most exalted minds is very obscure, and almost quite dark, and their practice of virtue lame and imperfect. And indeed, who can have the boldness to boast of perfection in this respect, when he hears the great Apostle complain



ing of the law of the flesh, and pathetically exclaiming, *Who shall deliver me from this body of death?* Rom. vii. 24. Besides, though wisdom and virtue, or piety were perfect, so long as we have bodies, we must at the same time have all bodily advantages, in order to perfect felicity. Therefore, the Satirist smartly ridicules the wise man of the Stoics: "He is," says he, "free, honored, beautiful, king of kings, and particularly happy, except when he is troubled with phlegm."

Since these things are so, we must raise our minds higher, and not live with our heads bowed down like the common sort of mankind; who, as St. Augustine expresses it, "look for a happy life in the region of death." To set our hearts upon the perishing goods of this wretched life and its muddy pleasures, is not the happiness of men, but of hogs. And if pleasure is dirt, other things are but smoke. Were this the only good proposed to the desires and hopes of men, it would not have been so great a privilege to have been born. Be therefore advised, young gentlemen, and beware of this poisonous cup, lest your minds thereby become brutish, and fall into a fatal oblivion of your original, and your end. Turn that part of your Composition which is Divine, to God its creator and father, without whom we can neither be happy, nor indeed *be* at all.

#### The Hope of Immortality its Evidence.

Truly, in my judgment, this previous impression and hope of immortality, and these earnest desires after it, are a very strong evidence of that immortality. These impressions, though in most men they lie overpowered and almost quite extinguished by the weight of their bodies, and an extravagant love to present enjoyments; yet, now and then, in time of adversity, break forth and exert themselves, especially under the pressure of severe distempers, and at the approaches of death. But those whose minds are purified, and their thoughts habituated to Divine things, with what constant and ardent wishes do they breathe after that blessed immortality! How often do their souls complain within them, that they have dwelt so long in these earthly tabernacles! Like exiles, they earnestly wish, make interest, and struggle hard to regain their native country. Moreover, does not that noble neglect of the body and its senses, and that contempt of all the pleasures of the flesh, which these heavenly souls have attained, evidently shew, that, in a short time, they will be taken from hence, and that the body and soul are of a very different, and almost contrary nature to one another; that, therefore, the duration of the one depends not upon the other, but is quite of another kind; and that the soul, set at liberty from the body, is not only exempted from death, but, in some sense, then begins to live, and then first



sees the light? Had we not this hope to support us, what ground should we have to lament our first nativity, which placed us in a life so short, so destitute of good, and so crowded with miseries; a life which we pass entirely in grasping phantoms of felicity, and suffering real calamities! So that if there were not, beyond this, a life and happiness that more truly deserves these names, who can help seeing, that, of all creatures, man would be the most miserable, and, of all men, the best the most unhappy?

Recollection of the Soul's dignity.

"Nobody," says Atticus in Cicero, "shall drive me from the immortality of the soul." And Seneca's words are, "I took pleasure to inquire into the eternity of the soul, and even, indeed to believe it. I resigned myself to so glorious an hope, for now I begin to despise the remains of a broken constitution, as being to remove into that immensity of time, and into the possession of endless ages."\* O how much does the soul gain by this removal!

As for you, young gentlemen, I doubt not but you will embrace this doctrine, not only as agreeable to reason, but as it is an article of the Christian faith. I only put you in mind to revolve it often within yourselves, and with a serious disposition of mind; for you will find it the strongest incitement to wisdom, good morals, and true piety. Nor can you imagine any thing that will more effectually divert you from a foolish admiration of present and perishing things, and from the allurements and sordid pleasures of this earthly body. Consider, I pray you, how unbecoming it is, to make a heaven-born soul, that is to live forever, a slave to the meanest, vilest, and most trifling things; and, as it were to thrust down to the kitchen a prince that is obliged to leave his country only for a short time. St. Bernard pathetically addresses himself to the body in favor of the soul, persuading it to treat the latter honorably, not only on account of its dignity, but also for the advantage that will thereby redound to the body itself: "Thou hast a noble guest, O flesh! a most noble one indeed, and all thy safety depends upon its salvation: it will certainly remember thee for good, if thou serve it well; and when it comes to its Lord, it will put him in mind of thee, and the mighty God himself will come to make thee who art now a vile body, like unto his glorious one; and, O wretched flesh, He who came in humility and obscurity to redeem souls, will come in great majesty, to glorify thee, and every eye shall see him." Be mindful, therefore, young gentlemen, of your better part, and accustom it to think of its own eternity, always and every where having its eyes fixed upon

\* SENECA Epis. 102.

that world to which it is most nearly related. And thus it will look down, as from on high, on all those things which the world considers as lofty and exalted, and will see them under its feet; and of all the things which are confined within the narrow verge of this present life, it will have nothing to desire, and nothing to fear.

#### Happiness of the Life to come.

I own, I am almost deterred from entering upon this inquiry by the vast obscurity and sublimity of the subject, which in its nature is such, that we can neither understand it, nor, if we could, can it be expressed in words. The divine Apostle, who had had some glimpse of this felicity, describes it no otherwise than by his silence, calling the words he heard, *unspeakable, and such as it was not lawful for a man to utter.* 2 Cor. xii. 4. And if he neither could nor would express what he saw, far be it from us boldly to force ourselves into or intrude upon what we have seen; especially as the same Apostle, in another place, acquaints us, for our future caution, that this was unwarrantably done by some rash and forward persons in his own time. But since in the sacred archives of this new world, however invisible and unknown to us, we have some maps and descriptions of it suited to our capacity: we are not only allowed to look at them, but as they were drawn for that very purpose, it would certainly be the greatest ingratitude, as well as the highest negligence in us, not to make some improvement of them. Here, however, we must remember, what a great odds there is between the description of a kingdom in a small and imperfect map, and the extent and beauty of that very kingdom when viewed by the traveller's eye; and how much greater the difference must be, between the felicity of that heavenly kingdom to which we are aspiring, and all, even the most striking figurative expressions, taken from the things of this earth, that are used to convey some faint and imperfect notion of it to our minds. What are these things, the false glare and shadows whereof, in this earth, are pursued with such keen and furious impetuosity, riches, honors, pleasures? All these, in their justest, purest, and sublimest sense are comprehended in this blessed life: it is a *treasure*, that can neither fail nor be carried away by force or fraud: it is an *inheritance* uncorrupted and undefiled; a *crown* that fadeth not away; a never-failing stream of joy and delight: it is a marriage-feast, and of all others the most joyous and most sumptuous; one that always satisfies, and never cloy the appetite: it is an eternal spring, and an everlasting light, a day without an evening: it is a paradise, where the lilies are always white and in full bloom, the saffron blooming, the trees sweat out their balsams, and the tree of life in the midst thereof: it is a city, where

the houses are built of living pearls, the gates, of precious stones, and the streets paved with the purest gold. Yet, all these are nothing but veils of the happiness to be revealed on that most blessed day : nay, the light itself, which we have mentioned among the rest, though it be the most beautiful ornament in this visible world, is at best but a shadow of that heavenly glory ; and how small soever that portion of this inaccessible brightness may be, which, in the sacred Scriptures, shines upon us through these veils, it certainly very well deserves that we should often turn our eyes towards it, and view it with the closest attention.

1. Now, the first that necessarily occurs in the constitution of happiness, is a full and complete deliverance from every evil, and every grievance ; which we may as certainly expect to meet with in that heavenly life, as it is impossible to be attained while we sojourn here below. All tears shall be wiped away from our eyes, and every cause and occasion of tears forever removed from our sight. There, there are no tumults, no wars, no poverty, no death, nor disease ; there, there is neither mourning, nor fear, nor sin, which is the source and fountain of all other evils : there is neither violence within doors nor without, nor any complaint, in the streets of that blessed city. There, no friend goes out, nor enemy comes in.

2. Full vigor of body and mind, health, beauty, purity, and perfect tranquillity.

3. The most delightful society of angels, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and all the saints ; among whom there are no reproaches, contentions, controversies, nor party-spirit, because there are, there, none of the sources whence they can spring, nor any thing to encourage their growth ; for there is, there, particularly, no ignorance, no blind self-love, no vain-glory nor envy, which is quite excluded from those divine regions ; but, on the contrary, perfect charity, whereby every one, together with his own felicity, enjoys that of his neighbors, and is happy in the one as well as the other ; hence there is among them a kind of infinite reflection and multiplication of happiness, like that of a spacious hall adorned with gold and precious stones, dignified with a full assembly of kings and potentates, and having its walls quite covered with the brightest looking-glasses.

4. But what infinitely exceeds, and quite eclipses all the rest, is that boundless ocean of happiness, which results from the beatific vision of the ever-blessed God ; without which, neither the tranquillity they enjoy, nor the society of saints, nor the possession of any particular finite good, nor indeed of all such taken together, can satisfy the soul, or make it completely happy.

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This beatific vision includes in it not only a distinct and intuitive knowledge of God, but so to speak, such a knowledge as

gives us the enjoyment of that most perfect Being, and, in some sense, unites us to Him; for such a vision, it must, of necessity, be, that converts that love of the Infinite Good which blazes in the souls of the saints, into full possession; that crowns all their wishes, and fills them with an abundant and overflowing fulness of joy, that vents itself in everlasting blessings and songs of praise.

And this is the only doctrine, if you believe it, (and I make no doubt but you do,) this, I say, is the only doctrine that will transport your whole souls, and raise them up on high. Hence you will learn to trample under feet all the turbid and muddy pleasures of the flesh, and all the allurements and splendid trifles of the present world. However those earthly enjoyments that are swelled up by false names and the strength of imagination, to a vast size, may appear grand and beautiful, and still greater and more engaging to those that are unacquainted with them; how small, how inconsiderable do they all appear to a soul that looks for a heavenly country, that expects to share the joys of angels, and has its thoughts constantly employed about these objects! To conclude, the more the soul withdraws, so to speak, from the body, and retires within itself, the more it rises above itself, and the more closely it cleaves to God, the more the life it lives in this earth resembles that which it will enjoy in Heaven, and the larger foretastes it has of the first-fruits of that blessed harvest. Aspire, therefore, to holiness, young gentlemen, *without which no man shall see the Lord.*

#### The religious principle natural to the human Mind.

Of all the institutions and customs received among men, we meet with nothing more solemn and general than that of religion and sacred rites performed to the honor of some deity; which is a very strong argument, that that persuasion, in preference to any other, is written, nay, rather engraven, in strong and indelible characters upon the mind of man. This is, as it were, the name of the great Creator stamped upon the noblest of all His visible works, that thus man may acknowledge himself to be His, and, concluding from the inscription he finds impressed upon his mind, that what belongs to God ought, in strict justice, to be restored to Him, be wholly reunited to his first principle, that immense Ocean of goodness whence he took his rise. The distemper that has invaded mankind, is, indeed, grievous and epidemical: it consists in a mean and degenerate love to the body and corporeal things, and, in consequence of this, a stupid and brutish forgetfulness of God, though He can never be entirely blotted out of the mind. This forgetfulness, a few, and but very few, alarmed and



awakened by the Divine rod, early shake off. And even in the most stupid, and such as are buried in the deepest sleep, the original impression sometimes discovers itself when they are under the pressure of some grievous calamity, or on the approach of danger, and especially upon a near prospect of death. Then, the thoughts of God, that had lain hid and been long suppressed, forced out by the weight of pain and the impressions of fear, come to be remembered; and the whole soul being, as it were, roused out of its long and deep sleep, men begin to look about them, inquire what the matter is, and seriously reflect whence they came, and whither they are going. Then, the truth comes naturally from their hearts. The stormy sea alarmed even profane sailors so much, that they awaked the sleeping prophet: *Awake, say they, thou sleeper, and call upon thy God.* Jonah i. 6.

#### Being of a God.

**THERE IS A GOD.** And here I cannot help fearing, that when we endeavor to confirm this leading truth, with regard to the First and Uncreated Being, by a long and labored series of arguments, we may seem, instead of a service, to do a kind of injury to God and man both. For why should we use the pitiful light of a candle to discover the sun, and eagerly go about to prove the being of Him who gave being to every thing else? Who alone exists necessarily, nay, we may boldly say, who alone exists; seeing all other things were by Him extracted out of nothing, and, when compared with him, they are nothing, and even less than nothing, and vanity. And would not any man think himself insulted, should it be suspected, that he doubted of the being of Him, without whom he could neither doubt, nor think, nor be at all? This persuasion, without doubt, is innate, and strongly impressed upon the mind of man, if any thing at all can be said to be so. Nor does Jamblicus scruple to say, "That to know God is our very being;" and in another place, "That it is the very being of the soul to know God, on whom it depends." Nor would he think amiss, who, in this, should espouse the opinion of Plato: for, to know this, is nothing more than to call to remembrance what was formerly impressed upon the mind; and when one forgets it, (which alas! is too much the case of us all,) he has as many remembrances, so to speak, within him, as he has members, and as many without him, as the individuals of the vast variety of creatures to be seen around him. Let, therefore, the indolent soul that has almost forgot God, be roused up, and every now and then say to itself, "Behold this beautiful starry heaven," &c.

## The Faith and Acknowledgement of a Divine Providence.

It is also a great comfort, to have the faith of this Providence constantly impressed upon the mind, so as to have recourse to it in the midst of all confusions, whether public or private, and all calamities from without or from within; to be able to say—The great King, who is also my Father, is the supreme ruler of all these things, and with Him all my interests are secure; to stand firm, with Moses, when no relief appears, and to look for the salvation of God from on high, and, finally, in every distress, when all hope of human assistance is swallowed up in despair, to have the remarkable saying of the father of the faithful stamped upon the mind, and to silence all fears with these comfortable words, *God will provide*. In a word, there is nothing that can so effectually conform the heart of man, and his inmost thoughts, and consequently the whole tenor of his life, to the most perfect rule of religion and piety, as a firm belief and frequent meditation on this Divine Providence, which superintends and governs the world. He who is firmly persuaded, that an exalted God of infinite wisdom and purity is constantly present with him, and sees all that he thinks or acts, will, to be sure, have no occasion to overawe his mind with the imaginary presence of a Lælius or a Cato. Josephus assigns this as the source or root of Abel's purity: "In all his actions," says he, "he considered that God was present with him, and therefore made virtue his constant study."\*

Moreover, the heathen nations acknowledge this superintendence of Divine Providence over human affairs in this very respect, and that it is exercised in observing the morals of mankind, and in distributing rewards and punishments. But this supposes some law or rule, either revealed from Heaven or stamped upon the hearts of men, to be the measure and test of moral good and evil, that is, virtue and vice. Man, therefore, is not a lawless creature, but capable of a law, and actually born under one, which he himself is also ready to own. "We are born in a kingdom," says the Rabbinical philosopher, "and to obey God is liberty." But this doctrine, however perspicuous and clear in itself, seems to be a little obscured by one cloud, that is, the extraordinary success which bad men often meet with, and the misfortunes and calamities to which virtue is frequently exposed. The saying of Brutus, "O! wretched virtue, thou art regarded as nothing, &c." is well known; as are also those elegant verses of the poet, containing a lively picture of the perplexity of a mind wavering and at a loss upon this subject: "My mind," says he, "has often been perplexed with difficulties and doubts, whether the gods regard the affairs of this earth, or whether there was no Providence at all. . . . For, when I considered the order and disposition of the world, and the

\* Antiq. lib. i. cap. 3.

boundaries set to the sea—I thence concluded, that all things were secured by the providence of God. . . . But when I saw the affairs of men involved in so much darkness and confusion, &c.”\*

But not to insist upon a great many other considerations, which even the philosophy of the heathens suggested, in vindication of the doctrine of Providence; there is one consideration of great weight to be set in opposition to the whole of this prejudice, viz., that it is an evidence of a rash and forward mind, to pass sentence upon things that are not yet perfect and brought to a final conclusion; which even the Roman stoic, and the philosopher of Chero-neæ insist upon, at large, on this subject. If we will judge from events, let us put off the cause and delay sentence, till the whole series of these events come before us; and let us not pass sentence upon a successful tyrant, while he is triumphant before our eyes, and while we are quite ignorant of the fate that may be awaiting himself or his son, or, at least, his more remote posterity. The ways of Divine justice are wonderful. “Punishment stalks silently, and with a slow pace; it will, however, at last overtake the wicked.” But, after all, if we expect another scene of things to be exhibited, not here, but in the world to come, the whole dispute concerning the events of this short and precarious life, immediately disappears and comes to nothing.

#### Of the Pleasure and Utility of Religion.

Though the author of the following passage was a great proficient in the mad philosophy of Epicurus, yet he had truth strongly on his side, when he said, “That nothing was more pleasant than to be stationed on the lofty temples, well defended and secured by the pure and peaceable doctrines of the wise philosophers.”†

Now, can any doctrine be imagined more wise, more pure and peaceable, and more sacred, than that which flowed from the most perfect fountain of wisdom and purity, which was sent down from heaven to earth, that it might guide all its followers to that happy place whence it took its rise? It is, to be sure, the wisdom of mankind to know God, and their indispensable duty, to worship Him. Without this, men of the brightest parts and greatest learning, seem to be born with excellent talents only to make themselves miserable; and, according to the expression of the wisest of kings, *He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow*, Eccl. i. 18. We must, therefore, first of all, consider this as a sure and settled point, that religion is the sole foundation of human peace and felicity. This, even the profane scoffers at Religion are, in some sort, obliged to own, though much against their will, even, while they are pointing their wit against it: for nothing is more commonly to be heard

\* CLAUDIAN in Rufinum, lib. 1.

† LUCRETIVS.

from them, than that the whole doctrine of religion was invented by some wise men, to encourage the practice of justice and virtue through the world. Surely then, religion, whatever else may be said of it, must be a matter of the highest value, since it is found necessary to secure advantages of so very great importance. But, in the mean time, how unhappy is the case of integrity and virtue, if what they want to support them is merely fictitious, and they cannot keep their ground but by means of a monstrous forgery! But far be it from us to entertain such an absurdity! For the first rule of righteousness cannot be otherwise than right, nor is there any thing more nearly allied or more friendly to virtue, than truth.

But religion is not only highly conducive to all the great advantages of human life, but is also, at the same time, most pleasant and delightful. Nay, if it is so useful, and absolutely necessary to the interests of virtue, it must, for this very reason, be also pleasant; unless one will call in question a maxim universally approved by all wise men, that "life cannot be agreeable without virtue:" a maxim of such irrefragable and undoubted truth, that it was adopted even by Epicurus himself.

How great, therefore, must have been the madness of that noted Grecian philosopher, who, while he openly maintained the dignity and pleasantness of virtue, at the same time employed the whole force of his understanding to ruin and sap its foundations! For, that this was his fixed purpose, Lucretius not only owns, but also boasts of it, and loads him with ill-advised praises for endeavoring, through the whole course of his philosophy, to free the minds of men from all the bonds and ties of religion. As if there was no possible way to make them happy and free, without involving them in the guilt of sacrilege and atheism! As if to eradicate all sense of a Deity out of the mind, were the only way to free it from the heaviest chains and fetters! Though, in reality, this would be effectually robbing man of all his valuable jewels, of his golden crown and chain, all the riches, ornaments, and pleasures of his life: which is inculcated at large, and with great eloquence, by a greater and more divine master of wisdom, the royal author of the Proverbs, who speaking of the precepts of religion, says, *They shall be an ornament of grace unto thine head, and chains about thy neck:* and of religion, under the name of wisdom, *If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hidden treasure. Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding.* Prov. i. 9; ii. 4; xiii. 14; iv. 7.

And it is, indeed, very plain, that if it were possible entirely to dissolve all the bonds and ties of religion, yet, that it should be so,



would certainly be the interest of none but the worst and most abandoned part of mankind. All the good and wise, if the matter was freely left to their choice, would rather have the world governed by the Supreme and Most Perfect Being, mankind subjected to His just and righteous laws, and all the affairs of men superintended by His watchful Providence, than that it should be otherwise. Nor do they believe the doctrines of religion with aversion or any sort of reluctance, but embrace them with pleasure, and are excessively glad to find them true. So that, if it was possible, to abolish them entirely, and any person, out of mere good-will to them, should attempt to do it, they would look upon the favor as highly prejudicial to their interest, and think his good-will more hurtful than the keenest hatred. Nor would any one, in his wits, choose to live in the world, at large, and without any sort of government, more than he would think it eligible to be put on board a ship without a helm or pilot, and, in this condition, to be tossed amidst rocks and quicksands. On the other hand, can any thing give greater consolation, or more substantial joy, than to be firmly persuaded, not only that there is an infinitely good and wise Being, but also that this Being preserves and continually governs the universe which Himself has framed, and holds the reins of all things in His powerful hand; that He is our father, that we and all our interests are His constant concern; and that, after we have sojourned a short while here below: we shall be again taken into His immediate presence? Or can this wretched life be attended with any sort of satisfaction, if it is divested of this Divine faith, and bereaved of such a blessed hope?

Moreover, every one who thinks a generous fortitude and purity of mind preferable to the charms and muddy pleasures of the flesh, finds all the precepts of religion not only not grievous, but exceeding pleasant and extremely delightful. So that, upon the whole, the saying of Hermes is very consistent with the nature of things: "There is one, and but one good thing among men, and that is religion." Even the vulgar could not bear the degenerate expression of the player who called out upon the stage, "Money is the chief good among mankind." But should any one say, Religion is the principal good of mankind, no objection could be made against it; for, without doubt, it is the only object the beauties whereof engage the love both of God and man.

But the principal things in religion, as I have frequently observed, are, just conceptions of God. Now concerning this infinite Being, some things are known by the light of nature and reason, others only by the revelation which He hath been pleased to make of Himself from heaven. That there is a God, is the distinct voice of every man, and of every thing without him. How much more then shall we be confirmed in the belief of this truth, if we attentively view the whole creation, and the wonderful order

and harmony that subsist between all the parts of the whole system! It is quite unnecessary to show, that so great a fabric could never have been brought into being without an all-wise and powerful Creator; nor could it now subsist without the same almighty Being to support and preserve it. "Let men, therefore, make this their constant study," says Lactantius, "even to know their common Parent and Lord, whose power can never be perfectly known, whose greatness cannot be fathomed, nor his eternity comprehended." When the mind of man, with its faculties, comes to be once intensely fixed upon Him, all other objects disappearing, and being, as it were removed quite out of sight, it is entirely at a stand and overpowered, nor can it possibly proceed further. But concerning the doctrine of this vast volume of the works of God, and that still brighter light which shines forth in the Scriptures, we shall speak more fully hereafter.

#### Of the Decrees of God.

Here, if any where, we ought, according to the common saying, to reason but in few words. I should, indeed, think it very improper to do otherwise; for such theories ought to be cautiously touched, rather than be spun out to a great length. One thing we may confidently assert, that all those things which the great Creator produces in different periods of time, were perfectly known to Him, and, as it were, present with Him, from eternity; and that every thing that happens, throughout the several ages of the world, proceeds in the same order and same precise manner, as the Eternal Mind at first intended it should; that none of His counsels can be disappointed or rendered ineffectual, or in the least changed or altered by any event whatsoever. *Known to God are all His works*, says the Apostle in the council of Jerusalem. Acts xv. 18. And the son of Sirach, *God sees from everlasting to everlasting, and nothing is wonderful in His sight*. Nothing is new or unexpected to Him; nothing can come to pass that He has not foreseen. And His first thoughts are so wise, that they admit no second ones that can be supposed wiser. And this stability and immutability of the Divine decrees, is asserted even by the Roman Philosopher: "It is necessary," says he, "that the same things be always pleasing to Him, who can never be pleased but with what is best."

Every artist, to be sure, as you also well know, works according to some pattern, which is the immediate object of his mind; and this pattern, in the all-wise Creator, must necessarily be entirely perfect, and every way complete. And if this is what Plato intended by his ideas, (which, not a few, and these by no means unlearned, think very likely) his own scholar, the great Stagyrte, and your favorite philosopher, had, surely, no reason so often and

so bitterly to inveigh against them. Be this as it may, all who acknowledge God to be the author of this wonderful fabric, and all these things in it, which succeed one another in their turns, cannot possibly doubt, that He has brought, and continues to bring them all about, according to that most perfect pattern subsisting in His eternal councils; and that these things that we call casual, are all unalterably fixed and determined to Him. For according to that of the philosopher, "Where there is most wisdom, there is least chance," and therefore, surely, where there is infinite wisdom, there is nothing left to chance at all.

This maxim, concerning the eternal councils of the supreme Sovereign of the world, besides that it every where shines clearly in the books of the sacred Scriptures, is also, in itself, so evident and consistent with reason, that we meet with it in almost all the works of the philosophers, and often, also, in those of the poets. Nor does it appear, that they mean any thing else, at least, for the most part, by the term *fate*; though you may meet with some things in their works, which, I own, sound a little harsh, and can scarcely be sufficiently softened by any, even the most favorable interpretation.

But, whatever else may seem to be comprehended under the term *fate*, whether taken in the mathematical or physical sense, as some are pleased to distinguish, it must at last of necessity be resolved into the appointment and good pleasure of the supreme Governor of the world. If even the blundering astrologers and fortune-tellers acknowledge, that the wise man has dominion over the stars; how much more evident is it, that all these things, and all their power and influence, are subject and subservient to the decrees of the all-wise God! Whence the saying of the Hebrews, "There is no planet to Israel."

And according as all these things in the heavens above and the earth beneath, are daily regulated and directed by the Eternal King, in the same precise manner were they all from eternity ordered and disposed by Him, who *worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will*, Eph. i. 11, who is more ancient than the sea and the mountains, or even the heavens themselves.

These things we are warranted and it is safe to believe. But what perverseness, or rather madness, is it, to endeavor to break into the sacred repositories of Heaven, and pretend to accommodate those secrets of the Divine kingdom, to the measures and methods of our weak capacities! To say the truth, I acknowledge that I am astonished and greatly at a loss, when I hear learned men, and professors of Theology, talking presumptuously about the order of the Divine decrees, and when I read such things in their works. "Paul," says St. Chrysostom, "considering this awful subject as an immense sea, was astonished at it, and viewing the vast abyss, started back, and cried out with a loud voice, *Oh! the depth!*"

Nor is there much more sobriety or moderation in the many notions that are entertained, and the disputes that are commonly raised about reconciling these Divine decrees with the liberty and free-will of man.

It is indeed true, that neither religion nor right reason will suffer the actions and designs of men, and consequently, even the very motions of the will, to be exempted from the empire of the counsel and good pleasure of God. Even the books of the heathens are filled with most express testimonies of the most absolute sovereignty of God, even with regard to these. The sentiments of Homer are well known;\* and with him agrees the tragic poet, Euripides; "O! Jupiter," says he, "why are we wretched mortals called wise? For we depend entirely upon thee, and we do whatever thou intendest we should."†

And it would be easy to bring together a vast collection of such sayings, but these are sufficient for our present purpose.

They always seemed to me to act a very ridiculous part, who contend, that the effect of the Divine decrees is absolutely irreconcilable with human liberty, because the natural and necessary liberty of a rational creature is, to act or choose from a rational motive, or spontaneously, and of purpose. But who sees not, that, on the supposition of the most absolute decree, this liberty is not taken away, but rather established and confirmed? For the decree is, that such an one shall make choice of, or do some particular thing, freely; and whoever pretends to deny, that whatever is done or chosen, whether good or indifferent, is so done or chosen, or, at least, may be so, espouses an absurdity. But, in a word, the great difficulty in all this dispute, is that with regard to the *origin of evil*. Some distinguish, and justly, the substance of the action, as you call it, or that which is physical in the action, from the morality of it. This is of some weight, but whether it takes away the whole difficulty, I will not pretend to say. Believe me, young gentlemen, it is an abyss, it is an abyss never to be perfectly sounded by any plummet of human understanding. Should any one say, "I am not to be blamed, but Jove and Fate," he will not get off so, but may be nonplussed by turning his own wit against him. The servant of Zeno, the Stoic philosopher, being caught in an act of theft, either with a design to ridicule his master's doctrine, or to avail himself of it in order to evade punishment, said, "It was my fate to be a thief." "And to be punished for it," said Zeno. Wherefore, if you will take my advice, withdraw your minds from a curious search into this mystery, and turn them directly to the study of piety, and a due reverence to the awful majesty of God. Think and speak of God and His secrets with fear and trembling, but dispute very little about them; and, if you would not undo yourselves, beware of disputing with Him. If

\* CHRYSOSTOM.

† IKET. 1. 734.



you transgress in anything, blame yourselves: if you do any good, or repent of evil, offer thanksgiving to God. This is what I earnestly recommend to you; in this I acquiesce myself; and to this, when much tossed and distressed with doubt and difficulties, I had recourse, as to a safe harbor. If any of you think proper, he may apply to men of greater learning; but let him take care he meet not with such as have more forwardness and presumption.

The Creator seen in the Creation.

Whoever looks upon this great system of the universe, of which he himself is but a very small part, with a little more than ordinary attention, unless his mind is become quite brutish within him, it will, of necessity, put him upon considering whence this beautiful frame of things proceeded, and what was its first original; or, in the words of the poet, "From what principles all the elements were formed, and how the various parts of the world at first came together."\*

Now, as we have already observed in our dissertation concerning God, that the mind rises directly from the consideration of this visible world, to that of its invisible Creator: so, from the contemplation of the First and Infinite Mind, it descends to this visible fabric; and again, the contemplation of this latter determines it to return, with the greatest pleasure and satisfaction, to that Eternal Fountain of goodness and of every thing that exists. Nor is this a vicious and faulty circle, but the constant course of a pious soul, travelling, as it were, backwards and forwards from earth to heaven, and from heaven to earth: a notion quite similar to that of the angels ascending and descending upon the ladder which Jacob saw in his vision. But this contemplation by all means requires a pure and divine temper of mind, according to the maxims of the philosopher: "He that would see God and goodness, must first be himself good, and like the Deity."† And those who have the eyes of their mind pure and bright, will sooner be able to read in those objects that are exposed to the outward eye, the great and evident characters of His eternal Power and Godhead.

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That liberality must be immortal and endless, the treasures whereof are infinite.

Nor is this to be doubted, but from this very goodness, together with the immense power and wisdom which shine forth so brightly in the creation and all the creatures, an immense weight of glory is reflected upon the Creator Himself, and the source of all these perfections. Nor must it be denied, that the manifold wisdom of

\* VIR. Ecl. vi.

† PLOTINUS.

God proposed this end likewise. And there is nothing more certain than that, from all these taken together, His works, His benevolent and diffusive goodness, His power and wisdom illustrated in the creation, and the glory that continually results therefrom, from His wise counsels, and His own most perfect nature, whence all these things flow; nothing is more certain, I say, than that, from all these taken together, the Divine Majesty enjoys an eternal and inexpressible delight and satisfaction. And thus all things return to that vast and immense Ocean, from whence they at first took their rise, according to the expression in the Proverbs, *He hath made all things for Himself*. Prov. xvi. 4. And the words of the song in Revelations are most express to this purpose: *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power, for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are, and were created*. Rev. iv. 11. Nor could it, indeed, be otherwise, than that He who is the Beginning of all things, should also be the End of all; a wonderful Beginning without a beginning, and an End without an end. So that, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews reasons concerning the oath of God, *As He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself*; in like manner we may argue here, as He could propose no greater end or design, He proposed Himself. It was the saying of Epicurus, "That the wise man does every thing for his own sake:" we, who are otherwise taught, should rather say, that the wise man does nothing for his own sake, but all for that of God. But the most exalted, to be sure, and the wisest of all beings, because He is so, must of necessity do all things for Himself; yet, at the same time, all His dispensations towards His creatures are most bountiful and benevolent.

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But O! whither do our hearts stray? Ought we not to dwell upon this pleasant contemplation, and even die in it? I should choose to be quite lost in it, and to be rendered altogether insensible, and, as it were, dead to these earthly trifles that make a noise around us. O sweet reciprocation of mutual delights! *The Lord shall rejoice in His works*, says the Psalmist; and presently after, *My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord*. Psal. civ. 31—4. Let us look sometimes to the heavens, sometimes to the sea and the earth, with the animals and plants that are therein, and very often to ourselves: and in all these, and in every thing else, but in ourselves particularly, let us contemplate God, the common Father of all, and our most exalted Creator, and let our contemplation excite our love.

They who have sent the ignorant and unlearned to pictures and images, as books proper for their instruction, have not acted very wisely; nor has that expedient turned out happily or luckily for the advantage of that part of mankind. But surely, this great volume,

or system, which is always open and exposed to the view of all, 's admirably adapted to the instruction both of the vulgar and the wise ; so that Chrysostom had good reason to call it " The great book for the learned and unlearned." And the saying of St Basil, is very much to the purpose : " From the beauty of those things which are obvious to the eyes of all, we acknowledge that His inexpressible beauty excels that of all the creatures ; and from the magnitude of those sensible bodies that surround us, we conclude the infinite and immense goodness of their Creator, whose plenitude of power exceeds all thought, as well as expression."\*

For this very end, it evidently appears that all things were made, and we are the only visible beings that are capable of this contemplation. " The world," says St. Basil, " is a school, or seminary, very proper for the instruction of rational souls in the knowledge of God." We have also the angels, those ministers of fire, to be spectators with us on this theatre. But will any of us venture to conjecture what they felt, and what admiration seized them, when they beheld those new kinds of creatures rising into being, and those unexpected scenes that were successively added to the preceding ones, on each of the six days of that first remarkable week, *when he laid the foundations of the earth, and placed the corner stone thereof ; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.* Job xxxviii. 6, 7.

But O, the stupidity of mankind ! All those stupendous objects are daily around us ; but, because they are constantly exposed to our view, they never affect our minds : so natural is it for us to admire new, rather than grand objects. Therefore, the vast multitude of stars which diversify the beauty of this immense body, does not call the people together ; but when any change happens therein, the eyes of all are fixed upon the heavens. " Nobody looks at the sun, but when he is obscured ; nobody observes the moon, but when she is eclipsed ; then nature seems to be in danger ; then vain superstition is alarmed, and every one is afraid for himself."† " But surely," says St. Bernard, concerning the sun and moon, " these are great miracles, very great to be sure ; but the first production, or creation of all things, is a vast miracle, and makes it easy to believe all the rest ; so that, after it, nothing ought to excite our wonder."

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The words of Epictetus are divine, and have a wonderful savor of piety : " You go to the city of Olympia" says he, " to see some of the works of Phidias ; but you have no ambition to convene, in order to understand and look at those works which may be seen without travelling at all. Will you never understand what you are, nor why you were brought into the world ; nor, finally, what that is which you have now an opportunity to view and contem-

\* ALEX. hom. i.

† SENECA.



plate?"\* And in another place, "For, if we were wise, what have we else to do, both in public and in private, but to praise and celebrate the Deity, and to return our thanks to Him? Ought we not, while we are digging, plowing, and eating, to sing to God this hymn? Great is the Lord, who has provided us with those necessities of life," &c.†

As for you, young gentlemen, I would have you to be sensible of the honor and dignity of your original state; and to be deeply impressed with the indignity and disgrace of your nature, now fallen and vitiated. And dwell particularly upon the contemplation of it. Suffer not the great honor and dignity of the human race, which is to know the Eternal and invisible God, to acknowledge Him, love Him, and worship Him, to decay and die away within you. This, alas! is the way of the far greater part of the world; but do you live in continual remembrance of your original, and assert your claim to Heaven, as being originally from it, and soon to return to it again.

The Providence of God—two difficulties in regard to it.

There are two difficulties, on this head, which are not easily solved. 1st, The success that commonly attends the wicked in this world, and the evil to which the good are exposed. On this subject, even the philosophers, pleading the cause of God, (which, if we take their word, they thought a matter of no great difficulty,) advanced a great many things. Seneca tells us, "There is a settled friendship, nay, a near relation and similitude between God and good men: he is even their father; but, in their education, he inures them to hardships. When, therefore, you see them struggling with difficulties, sweating, and employed in up-hill work; while the wicked, on the other hand, are in high spirits, and swim in pleasures; consider, that we are pleased with modesty in our children, and forwardness in our slaves; the former we keep under by severe discipline, while we encourage impudence in the latter. Be persuaded that God takes the same method. He does not pamper the good man with delicious fare, but tries him; he accustoms him to hardships, and (which is a wonderful expression in a heathen) PREPARES HIM FOR HIMSELF." And in another place, "Those luxurious persons whom he seems to indulge and to spare, He reserves for evils to come. For you are mistaken, if you think any one excepted. The man who has been long spared, will at last have his portion of misery; and that he seems to have been dismissed, is only delayed for a time."‡ And a vast deal more to this purpose. The same sort of sentiments we meet with in Plutarch: "God takes the same method," says

\* Arr. lib. i. cap. 6.

† Ibid. cap. 16.

‡ Sen. de Gubern. Mundi.



he, "with good men, that teachers do with their scholars, when they exact more than ordinary of those children of whom they have the greatest hopes." And it is a noble thought which we meet with in the same author: "If he who transgresses in the morning," says he, "is punished in the evening, you will not say that, in this case, justice is slow; but to God, one, or even several ages, are but as one day." How near is this to St. Peter's saying on the same subject! 2 Peter iii. 8.

2dly, The other point upon this subject, which perplexes men fond of controversy, and is perplexed by them, is, how to reconcile human liberty with Divine providence, which we have taken notice of before. But, to both these difficulties, and to all others that may occur upon the subject, I would oppose the saying of St. Augustine: "Let us grant that he can do some things which we cannot understand."

#### Service of God from the principle of Love.

Let us, therefore, look upon God as our Father, and venture to trust Him with our all. Let us ask and beg of Him what we want, and look for supplies from no other quarter. This, the indulgent father in Terence desired; and much more our Heavenly Father. And surely, every thing is better conducted by a dutiful love and confidence, than by an ignoble and servile fear; and we are very injurious both to Him and ourselves, when we think not, that all things, on His part, are managed with the greatest goodness and bounty. It is a true test of religion and obedience, when, with honorable thoughts, and a firm confidence in our Father, we absolutely depend upon Him, and serve Him from a principle of love. "Be not," says Augustine, "a froward boy, in the house of the Best of fathers, loving Him when He is fond of thee, and hating Him when He gives thee chastisement, as if, in both cases, He did not intend to provide an inheritance for thee." If we suppose this Providence to be the wisest and the best, it is necessary that in every instance our wills should be perfectly submissive to its designs; otherwise, we prefer our own pleasure to the will of Heaven, which appears very unnatural. St. Augustine, on the expression, *Upright in heart*, which we frequently meet with in the Psalms, makes an excellent observation; "If you cheerfully embrace," says he, "the Divine will in some things, but in others would rather prefer your own, you are crooked in heart, and would not have your crooked inclinations conformed to His upright intentions, but, on the contrary, would bend His upright will to yours."

## Lecture xiv.—Of Christ the Saviour.

It is acknowledged, that the publication of the gospel is exceedingly agreeable, and perfectly answers its original name, which signifies *good tidings*. How much sweeter is this joyful news, than the most ravishing and delightful concerts of music! Nay, these are the best tidings that were ever heard in any age of the world. O happy shepherds, to whom this news were sent down from heaven! Ye, to be sure, though watching in the fields, exposed to the severe cold of the night, were, in this, more happy than kings that slept at their ease in gilded beds; that the wonderful nativity of the Supreme King, begotten from eternity, that nativity which brought salvation to the whole world, was first communicated to you, and just at the time it happened. *Behold*, says the angel, *I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day a Saviour*. Luke ii. 10, 11. And immediately, a great company of the heavenly host joined the angel, and in your hearing sung, *Glory to God in the highest*. And indeed, then, in the strictest truth, “A most extraordinary child was sent down from the lofty heavens,” &c.\* Whence also, his name was sent down along with him: *His name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins*. Matt. i. 21. “O sweet name of Jesus,” says St. Bernard, “honey in the mouth, melody in the ears, and healing to the heart.” This is the Saviour, who, though we were so miserable, and so justly miserable, yet, would not suffer us to perish. Nor did he only put on our nature, but also our sins; that is, in a legal sense, our guilt being transferred to him. Whence we not only read, that *the Word was made flesh*, John i. 14, but also, that *he was made sin for us, who knew no sin*: 2 Cor. v. 12; and even, as we have it in the Epistle to the Galatians, ch. iii. v. 13, that he was *made a curse*, that from him an eternal blessing and felicity might be derived to us. The spotless Lamb of God bore our sins, that were devolved upon him: by thus bearing them, he destroyed them; and by dying for them, gained a complete victory over death. And how wonderful is the gradation of the blessings he procured for us! He not only delivered us from a prison and death, but presents us with a kingdom: according to that of the Psalmist, *Who redeemeth thee from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies*. Psalm ciii. 4.

I believe there are none so stupid or insensible, as to refuse that these tidings are very agreeable and pleasing to the ear. But we may, not without some reason, suspect of the greatest part of nominal Christians, who commonly receive these truths with great applause, that it may be said to them, without any injustice, what

\* VIRG. Ecl.

is all this to you? These privileges are truly great and manifold, and indifferently directed to all to whom they are preached, unless they reject them, and shut the door against happiness offering to come in: and this is not only the case of a great part of mankind, but they also impose upon themselves by false hopes, as if it were enough to hear of these great blessings, and dream themselves happy, because these sounds had reached their ears. But, O unhappy men! what will all these immense riches signify to you, I must indeed say, if you are not allowed to use them, but rather, if you know not how to avail yourselves of them? I therefore earnestly wish that these words of the gospel were well fixed in your minds: *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not; but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.* John i. 10—12. *In him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid,* Col. ii. 3; and without him, there is nothing but emptiness, because *in him all fulness doth dwell.* But what advantage can it be to us to hear these riches of our Jesus spoken of at great length, and to excellent purpose, or even to speak of them ourselves, if, all the while, we talk of them as a good foreign to us, and in which we have no concern, because our hearts are not yet open to receive him? What, pray, would the most accurate description of the Fortunate Islands, as they are called, or all the wealth of the Indies and the New World, with its golden mines, signify to a poor man half naked, struggling with all the rigors of cold and hunger? Should one, in these circumstances, I say, hear or read of these immense treasures, or should any one describe them to him in the most striking manner, either by word of mouth, or with the advantage of an accurate pen; can it be doubted, but this empty display of riches, this phantom of wealth and affluence, would make his sense of want and misery the more intolerable? Unless it be supposed, that despair had already reduced him to a state of insensibility. What further enhances the misery of those who hear of this treasure, and think of it to no purpose, is this, that there is no one of them, who is not miserable by choice, and a beggar in the midst of the greatest wealth; and not only miserable by choice, but obstinately so, from an invincible and distracted fondness for the immediate causes of his misery. “For who but a downright madman would reject such golden offers?”

To give a brief and plain state of the case: to those who sincerely and with all their hearts receive him, Christ is *all things*; to those who receive him not, *nothing*. For, how can any good, however suitable or extensive, be actually enjoyed, or indeed any such enjoyment conceived, without some kind of union between that good and the person supposed to stand in need of it? *Behold,* says the Psalmist, *all those that are far from Thee, shall perish.*



Psalm lxxiii. 27. To be united to God, is the great and the only good of mankind. And the only means of this union, is Jesus. In whatever sense you take it, he ought truly to be called the *union of unions*; who, that he might with the greater consistency, and the more closely, unite our souls to God, did not disdain to unite himself to a human body.

The great business of our life, therefore, young gentlemen, is this acceptance of Christ, and this inseparable union with him, which we are now recommending. Thrice happy, and more than thrice happy, are they who are joined with him in this undivided union, which no complaints, nor even the day of death can dissolve. Nay, the last day is happy above all other days, for this very reason, that it fully and finally completes this union, and is so far from dissolving it, that it renders it absolutely perfect and everlasting.

But, that it may be coeval with eternity, and last forever, it is absolutely necessary that this union should have its beginning in this short and fleeting life. And pray, what hinders those of us that have not entered into this union before, to enter into it without delay? seeing the bountiful Jesus not only rejects none that come unto him, but also offers himself to all that do not wilfully reject him, and standing at the door, earnestly begs to be admitted. Oh, why do not these *everlasting doors open, that the King of glory may enter*, and reign within us? Nay, though he were to be sought in a far country, and with great labor, why should we delay, and what unhappy chains detain us? Why do we not, after shaking them all off, and even ourselves, go as it were out of ourselves, and seek him incessantly till we find him? Then, rejoicing over him, say with the heavenly Spouse, *I held him, and would not let him go*; and further add, with the same Spouse, that blessed expression, *My beloved is mine, and I am his*. And, indeed, this interest is always reciprocal. No man truly receives Jesus, who does not at the same time deliver up himself wholly to him. Among all the advantages we pursue, there is nothing comparable to this exchange. Our gain is immense from both; not only from the acceptance of him, but also from surrendering ourselves to him. So long as this is delayed, we are the most abject slaves. When one has delivered himself up to Christ, then, and then only, he is truly free, and becomes master of himself. Why should we wander about to no purpose? To him let us turn our eyes, on him fix our thoughts, that he who is ours by the donation of the Father, and his own free gift, may be ours by a cheerful and joyous acceptance. As St. Bernard says on those words of the prophet, *to us a child is born, to us a son is given*: "Let us therefore make use of what is ours," "for our own advantage." So then, let him be ours by *possession* and *use*, and let us be his for ever, never forgetting how dearly he has bought us.



## Dignity of becoming Sons of God.

To this exalted dignity are admitted the humble, the poor, the obscure, the ignorant, barbarians, slaves, sinners, whom the world look upon as nothing, and hold in the greatest contempt: of these nothing is required but true and sincere faith; no learning, nor noble extract, nor any submission to the Mosaic law; but upon every man of whatever rank or condition, who believes this word, He in return bestows this dignity, *that they should become the sons of God*; that is, that what Christ was by nature, they should become by grace. Now, what is more sublime and exalted than this honor, that those who were formerly *children of Satan*, and *heirs of hell*, should by faith alone be made the *sons of God*, *brethren of Christ*, and *joint heirs* of the heavenly kingdom? If the sacred fire of the Romans happened at any time to be extinguished, it could only be lighted again at the rays of the sun. The life of souls, to be sure, is a sacred flame of Divine love: this flame, as we are now born into the froward race of fallen mankind, is, alas! but too truly and unhappily extinguished, and by no means to be kindled again, but by the enlivening light and heat of the *Sun of righteousness*, who is most auspiciously risen upon us.

## The Soul unsatisfied till it returns to God.

Suppose a more complete assemblage of sublunary enjoyments, and a more perfect system of earthly felicity than ever the sun beheld, the mind of man would instantly devour it, and, as if it were still empty and unsatisfied, would require something more. And, indeed, by this insatiable thirst, the mind of man discovers its natural excellence and dignity; for thus it proves, that all things here below are insufficient to satisfy or make it happy; and its capacity is so great and extensive, that it cannot be filled by the whole of this visible frame of things. For, as St. Augustine observes, "Thou hast made us, O Lord, for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they return to Thee." The mind that makes God its refuge, after it has been much tossed to and fro, and distressed in the world, enjoys perfect peace and absolute security; and it is the fate of those, and those only, who put into this safe harbor, to have what the same St. Augustine calls a very great matter, "The frailty of man, together with the security of God."

Therefore, it is not without reason, that the royal Psalmist boasts not of his victories, nor the splendor of his royal crown, but of this one advantage: *The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup, Thou maintainest my lot*: and, on the justest grounds, he immediately adds, *The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have goodly heritage*. Psalm xvi. 5, 6. And it is quite agreeable to reason, that what improves and completes any

thing else must be itself more complete and perfect : so that the mind of man can neither be made happy by earthly enjoyments, which are all far inferior to it in dignity, nor be so in itself. Nay, neither can the angels, though of a more perfect and sublime nature, confer felicity either upon men, or themselves ; but both they and we have our happiness lodged in that Eternal Mind, which alone is its own felicity. Nor is it possible for us to find it any where else, but in our union with that Original Wisdom and Goodness, from which we at first took our rise. Away, then, with all the fictitious schemes of felicity proposed by the philosophers, even those of them that were most artfully contrived ; for even Aristotle's perfection of virtue, as well as what the Stoics fancied concerning their wise man, are mere fictions. They are nothing but dreams and fancies, that ought to be banished to Utopia. For what they describe is no where to be found among men, and if it were, it would not constitute complete felicity. So far, indeed, they are to be commended, that they call in the mind from external enjoyments to itself ; but in this they are defective, that when the mind is returned to itself, they carry it no further, nor direct it to ascend, as it were, above itself. They sometimes, it is true, drop such expressions as these, "That there can be no good disposition of the mind without God ;" and that, in order to be happy, the soul must be raised up to divine things : they also tell us, "That the wise man loves God most of all, and for this reason is the most happy man." But these expressions they drop only at random, and by the bye. O ! how much fuller and clearer are the instructions of the Teacher sent down from heaven : *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* Matt. v. 3.

But because the purest minds of the saints, while they sojourn in this earth, still retain some mixture of earthly dross, and arise not to perfect purity ; therefore, they cannot yet enjoy the full vision of God, nor, consequently, that perfect happiness which is inseparably connected with it. *For they see only darkly, and through a glass.* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. But with the advantage even of this obscure light, they direct their steps, and go on cheerful and unwearied. The long-wished-for day will at length come, when they will be admitted into the fullest light. That day, which the unhappy men of this world dread as their last, the sons of light wish for, as their nativity into an endless life, and embrace it with the greatest joy when it comes. And this, indeed, seems to me to be the strongest argument for another life and an immortality to come. For since no complete or absolutely perfect happiness is to be found in this life, it must certainly follow, that either there is no such thing to be had any where, or we must live again somewhere after our period here is out. And, O ! what *fools* are we, and how *slow of heart to believe*, who think so rarely, and with such coolness, of that blessed country ; and that, in this parched

and thirsty land, where even those few who are so happy have only some foretastes of that supreme happiness. But when they remove hence, *they shall be abundantly satisfied* (or as the word ought to be translated, *inebriabuntur, intoxicated*.) *O Lord, with the fatness of Thy house, and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures.* Psalm xxxvi. 9. Thus the divine Psalmist expresses it; and, to be sure, it is very surprising, that the great and ancient philosopher Pythagoras, in communicating his thoughts upon the same subject, should happen to fall upon the very same figure; for he used to promise those of his disciples who conducted themselves right in this life, that they should be continually *drunk* in that which is to come.

But what we have said formerly, of the felicity of the life to come, and all that we could say, were we to treat of the same subject over again, is but mere trilling. And yet, it is not disagreeable to hear children speak, even with stammering, about the dignity of their father, and of the riches and magnificence of his inheritance. It is pleasant and decent to speak of our native country, even while we are sojourning in a foreign land. But, for the present, I shall insist no longer on this subject, but, turning the tables, lay before you that dreadful punishment which stands in opposition to this happiness, by presenting you only with a transient view of the future misery of the wicked. And though this is indeed a most unpleasant task, yet nothing but our own carelessness and inattention can render it useless.

Here, first of all, it is to be observed, that as, in this life, there is no perfect felicity; so neither here is there any complete misery. Those whom we look upon as the most wretched in this world, have their sufferings chequered with many intervals of ease. But the misery to come admits of no abatement; it is all of a piece, without admitting any mixture of relief. They are surely mad with their notions, who here talk of the advantages of being or existence, and contend that it is more desirable to be miserable, than not to be at all. For my part, I am fully satisfied they can never persuade any man of the truth of their assertion; nor even believe it themselves, when they think seriously on the subject. But, not to insist on this, it is certain, that all kind of delights are forever banished from that eternal and frightful prison. There is there no light, no day, nor sleep, which is the blessing of the night, and, indeed, nothing at all but places full of darkness, precipices, nakedness, and all kinds of horror; no entertainments, merry meetings, nor any sensible pleasure; and to be for ever separated from all such must be no small misery, especially to those who used to pass their time amidst such scenes of mirth and jollity, and imagined themselves in some measure happy therein. And that the remembrance of this may distress them the more, they will be continually haunted with a thought, that will cleave to them like



a worm devouring their bowels, and constantly keep them in mind, that, out of a distracted fondness for these fleeting pleasures, which have now flown away, without the hope of returning, they have lost those joys that are heavenly and eternal, whereof they will have some knowledge; but what kind of knowledge that will be, and how far extended to enhance their torments, is not ours to determine. But who will attempt to express the excess of their misery, or describe those streams of brimstone and eternal flames of Divine wrath? Or rather, who will not tremble, I say not in describing them, but even in thinking of them, and be quite overpowered with an idea so shocking?

That I may no further attempt to speak things unutterable, and to derogate from a grand subject by inadequate expressions, behold now, my dear youths, if you believe these things, behold, I say, you have now life and death laid before you; choose for yourselves. And that you may not put off a matter of such importance, consider these things, I pray, seriously, and say to yourselves, concerning the vanishing shadows of external things, How long will these enjoyments last? O! how soon will they pass! Even while I am speaking these words, while I am thinking of them, they fly past me. Is any one oppressed with calamities? Let them say cheerfully with a remarkably good man, "Lord, while I am here, kill me, burn me, only spare me there." Is there any one among you of weak capacity, unhappy in expressing himself, of an unfavorable aspect, or deformed in body? Let him say with himself, It is a matter of small consequence: I shall soon leave this habitation, and, if I am but good myself, be soon removed to the mansions of the blessed. Let these thoughts prevent his being dejected in mind, or overcome with too much sorrow. If any one is distinguished by a good understanding, or outward beauty, or riches, let him reflect, and seriously consider, how soon all excellencies of this kind will pass away, that he may not be vain, or lifted up with the advantages of fortune. Let it be the chief care and study of you all, to avoid the works of darkness, that so you may escape utter and eternal darkness; and to embrace with open and cheerful hearts that Divine light which hath shone from Heaven, that, when you are divested of these bodies, you may be received into the glorious mansions of that blessed and perfect light.

Lecture xix.—That Holiness is the only true Happiness on this Earth.

The journey we are engaged in is indeed great, and the way up-hill; but the glorious prize which is set before us, is also great, and our great and valiant Captain, who has long ago ascended up on high, supplies us with strength. If our courage at any time fails us, let us fix our eyes upon him, and, according to the advice of the Apostle, in his divine Epistle to the Hebrews (ch. xii. 2.)



*Look unto Jesus*, removing our eyes from all inferior objects, that, being carried up aloft, they may be fixed upon him; which the original words seem to import. Then, being supported by the Spirit of Christ, we shall overcome all those obstacles in our way, that seem most difficult to our indolent and effeminate flesh. And, though the way from the earth towards heaven is by no means easy, yet, even the very difficulty will give us pleasure, when our hearts are thus eagerly engaged and powerfully supported. Even difficulties and hardships are attended with particular pleasure, when they fall in the way of a courageous mind. As the poet expresses it, "Serpents, thirst, and burning sand, are pleasing to virtue. Patience delights in hardships: and honor, when it is dearly purchased, is possessed with the greater satisfaction."<sup>38</sup>\*

If what we are told concerning that glorious city, obtain credit with us, we shall cheerfully travel towards it, nor shall we be at all deterred by the difficulties that may be in the way. But, however, as it is true, and more suitable to the weakness of our minds, which are rather apt to be affected with things present and near, than such as are at a great distance, we ought not to pass over in silence, that the way to the happiness reserved in heaven, which leads through this earth, is not only agreeable because of the blessed prospect it opens, and the glorious end to which<sup>39</sup> it conducts, but also, for its own sake, and on account of the innate pleasure to be found in it, far preferable to any other way of life that can be made choice of, or, indeed, imagined. Nay, that we may not, by low expressions, derogate from a matter so grand and so conspicuous, that holiness and true religion which leads directly to the highest felicity, is itself the only happiness, as far as it can be enjoyed on this earth. Whatever naturally tends to the attainment of any other advantage, participates, in some measure, of the nature of that advantage. Now, the way to perfect felicity, if anything can be so, is a means that, in a very great measure, participates of the nature of its end; nay, it is the beginning of that happiness; it is also to be considered as a part of it, and differs from it, in its completest state, not so much in kind, as in degree. So that in Scripture it has the same names: as, for instance, in that passage of the Evangelist, *This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God*. John xvii. 3. That is, not only the way to eternal life, but also, the beginning and first rudiments of it, seeing the same knowledge, when completed, or the full beatific vision of God, is eternal life in its fulness and perfection. Nor does the divine Apostle make any distinction between these two: *Now*, says he, *we see darkly through a glass; but then we shall see openly*, or, as he expresses it, *face to face*. *Now I know in part; but then I shall know as I also am known*. 1 Cor.

\* LUCAN, lib. ix. 9.

xiii. 12. That celestial life is called an *inheritance in light*, Col. i. 12; and the heirs of it, even while they are sojourning in this earth, *children of the light*, 1 Thess. v. 5, and, expressly, *light in the Lord*. *You were*, says the Apostle, *sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord*. Eph. v. 8. They will be there perfectly holy, and without spot; and even here they are called holy, and, in some respect, they are so. Hence it is, that those who are really and truly good and pious, are, in Scripture, often called blessed, though they are not fully and perfectly so. *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord*. Psal. cxii. 1. *And blessed are the undefiled in the way*. Psal. cxix. 1.

Even the philosophers give their testimony to this truth; and their sentiments, on this subject, are not altogether to be rejected: for they almost unanimously are agreed, that felicity, so far as it can be enjoyed in this life, consists solely, or a least principally, in virtue. But, as to their assertion, that this virtue is perfect in a perfect life, it is rather expressing what were to be wished, than describing things as they are. They might have said with more truth and justice, that it is imperfect in an imperfect life; which, no doubt, would have satisfied them, if they had known that it was to be made perfect in another place, and another life, that truly deserves the name, and will be complete and perfect. In this, however, we heartily agree with them, that virtue, or, as we rather choose to express it, piety, which is absolutely the sum and substance of all virtues and all wisdom, is the only happiness of this life, so far as it is capable thereof.

And if we seriously consider this subject but a little, we shall find the saying of the wise king Solomon concerning this wisdom, to be unexceptionably true: *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*.

Doth religion require any thing of us more than that we live *soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*? Now what, I pray, can be more pleasant or peaceable than these? Temperance is always at leisure, luxury always in a hurry: the latter weakens the body and pollutes the soul, the former is the sanctity, purity, and sound state of both. It is one of Epicurus's fixed maxims, "That life can never be pleasant without virtue." Vices seize upon men with the violence and rage of furies; but the Christian virtues replenish the breast which they inhabit, with a heavenly peace and abundant joy, and thereby render it like that of an angel. The slaves of pleasure and carnal affections, have within them, even now, an earnest of future torments; so that, in this present life, we may truly apply to them that expression in the Revelations, *They that worship the beast, have no rest day nor night*. "There is perpetual peace with the humble," says the most devout à Kempis; "but the proud and the covetous are never at rest."

If we speak of charity, which is the root and spring of justice, what a lasting pleasure does it diffuse through the soul ! "Envy," as the saying is, "has no days of festivity ;" it enjoys not even its own advantages, while it is tormented with those it sees in the possession of others. But charity is happy, not only in its own enjoyments, but also in those of others, even as if they were its own : nay, it is then most happy in the enjoyment of its own good things, when, by liberality, it makes them the property of others. In short, it is a Godlike virtue. There is nothing more Divine in man, "than to wish well to man, and to do good to as many as one possibly can." But piety, which worships God in constant prayer, and celebrates Him with the highest praises, raises man above himself, and gives him rank among the angels. And contemplation, which is indeed the most genuine and purest pleasure of the human soul, and the very summit of felicity, is no where so sublime and enriched, as it will be found to be in true religion, where it may expatiate in a system of Divine truths most extensive, clear, and infallibly certain, mysteries that are most profound, and hopes that are the most exalted : and he that can render these subjects familiar to his mind, even on this earth, enjoys a life replete with heavenly pleasure.

I might enlarge greatly on this subject, and add a great many other considerations to those I have already offered ; but I shall only further observe, that that sweet virtue of contentment, so effectual for quieting the mind, which philosophy sought for in vain, religion alone has found ; and also discovered, that it takes its rise from a firm confidence in the almighty power of Divine Providence. For what is there that can possibly give uneasiness to him who commits himself entirely to that Paternal Goodness and wisdom, which he knows to be infinite, and securely devolves the care of all his concerns upon it ?

If any of you object, (what has been observed before,) that we often see good men meet with severe treatment, and also read that *many are the afflictions of the just* ; I answer, do you not also read what immediately follows ? *But the Lord delivereth him out of them all.* Psal. xxxiv. 19. And it would be madness to deny, that this more than compensates the other. But neither are the wicked quite exempted from the misfortunes and calamities of life ; and when they fall upon them, they have nothing to support them under such pressures, none to extricate or deliver them.

But a true Christian, encouraged by a good conscience, and depending upon the divine favor, bears with patience all these evils, by the efforts of generous love and unshaken faith : they all seem light to him ; he despises what he suffers, while he waits with patience for the object of his hope. And, indeed, what, either in life or in death, can he be afraid of, whose *life is hid with Christ in God* ; and of whom it may be justly said, without exag-



geration, "If the world should be crushed and broken to pieces, he would be undaunted, even while the ruins fell upon his head."\*

#### Practical study of the Bible.

Let him that desires to be, not only a nominal proficient in theology, but a real *lover of God*, and willing to be taught by Him, resolve within himself, above all things, to make this sacred volume his constant study, mixing his reading with frequent and fervent prayer : for if this be omitted, his labor will be altogether in vain, supposing him to be ever so well versed, not only in these books, but also to have all the advances that can be had from the knowledge of languages, and the assistance of commentators and interpreters. Different men have different views in reading this Book. As, in the same field, the ox looks for grass, the hound for a hare, and the stork for a lizard, some, fond of critical remarks, pick up nothing but little stones and shells ; others run in pursuit of sublime mysteries, giving themselves but very little trouble about the precepts and instructions that are clear and evident, and these plunge themselves into a pit that has no bottom. But the genuine disciples of this true wisdom, are those who make it their daily employment, to purify their hearts by the water of those fountains, and reduce their whole lives to a conformity with this heavenly doctrine. They desire not to know these things, only that they may have the reputation of knowledge, or to be distinguished in the world ; but that their souls may be healed, and their steps directed, so that they may be led through the paths of righteousness, to the glorious felicity which is set before them.

The sum of all is, that our felicity lies solely and entirely in that blessed God, who is also the fountain and source of our being ; that the only means of our union with Him, is true religion ; and this, again, consists in our entertaining just notions of God, worshipping Him acceptably, and endeavoring after a constant and unwearied obedience to all his commands, according to that most pure and perfect rule laid down in those Divine Books which we profess to receive as such. Let us, therefore, have constantly fixed in our minds these words of the Psalmist, *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, that walk in the way of the Lord. Thou hast commanded us to keep Thy precepts diligently. O! that my ways were directly to keep Thy statutes.* Psal. cxix. 1, 4, 5.

#### What is God?

When we are to speak of Him, let us always call to remembrance the admonition which bids us speak *with reverence and fear*. For

\* HOR. lib. iii. Od. 3.



what can we say that is worthy of Him, since man, when he speaks of God, is but a blind person describing light? Yet, blind as we are, there is one thing we may, with great truth, say of that glorious light, and let us frequently repeat it: O when will that blessed day shine forth, which shall deliver the soul from those thick integuments of flesh, that like scales on the eye, obstruct its sight, and shall introduce it into a more full and open view of that primitive, eternal Light! Perhaps, the properest answer we could give to the question, What is God? would be to observe a most profound silence; or, if we should think proper to give any answer, it ought to be something next to this absolute silence; viz. God is; which gives us a higher and better idea of Him, than anything we can either express or conceive.

#### Contemplation on the Attributes of God.

Rather than insist upon metaphysical speculations, let us, while we walk daily in these pleasant fields, be constantly culling fresh and never-fading flowers. "When the Psalmist cries out, *Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and of His greatness there is no end*, he wanted to shew," saith St. Augustine, "How great He is. But how can this be done? Though he repeated, *Great, Great*, the whole day, it would have been to little purpose, for he must have ended at last, because the day would have ended; but his greatness was before the beginning of days, and will reach beyond the end of time." The poet expresses himself admirably well: "I will praise thee, O blessed God, with my voice, I will praise thee, also, with silence. For thou, O inexpressible Father, who canst never be known, understandest the silence of the mind, as well as any words or expressions."\*

#### How to regulate life according to the rules of Religion.

My first advice shall be, *to avoid too much sleep*, which wastes the morning hours, that are most proper for study, as well as for the exercises of religion, and stupefies and enervates the strength of body and mind. I remember that the famous abbot of Clairvaux, (St. Bernard,) when he found the friars sleeping immoderately, used to say, "That they slept like the secular clergy." And though we do not admit of the severe rules to which the monks subjected themselves, we must at least allow, that the measure and degree of sleep and other bodily refreshments suitable for a young man devoted to study and devotion, is very far different from that excess in which the common sort of mankind indulge themselves.

Another advice, which is akin to, and nearly connected with

\* Syn. Hymno. 4to.

the former, shall be, to observe *temperance in eating and drinking*. For moderation in sleeping, generally follows sobriety in eating and other sensual gratifications; but that thick cloud of vapors that arises from a full stomach, must of necessity overwhelm all the animal spirits, and keep them long locked up in an indolent, inactive state. Therefore, the Greeks, not without reason, express these two duties, *to be sober, and to be watchful*, indifferently by the same term. And the Apostle Peter, that he might make his connexion more evident, uses, indeed, two words for this purpose; but exhorts to these duties as closely connected together, or rather, as if they were, in some respect, but one, *Be sober, be vigilant*, 1 Pet. v. 8. And in the same Epistle, having substituted another word for sobriety, he expresses watchfulness by the same word he had put for sobriety in the other place, *Be sober and watch*. 1 Pet. iv. 7. Both these dispositions are so applied to the mind, as to include a sober and watchful state of the body and senses; as this is exceeding useful, nay, quite necessary, in order to a correspondent frame of the mind, and that disposition both of body and mind, not only subservient, but also necessary to piety and constancy in prayer: *Be sober and watch unto prayer*. 1 Pet. iv. 7.

When the body is reduced to its lightest and most active state, still, as it is corruptible, it is, to be sure, a burden to the mind. How much more must it be so, when it is depressed with an immoderate load of meat and drink, and, in consequence of this, of sleep! Nor can the mind rouse itself, or use the wings of contemplation and prayer with freedom, when it is overpowered with so heavy a load: nay, neither can it make any remarkable progress in the study of human literature, but will move slowly and embarrassed, be at a stand, like a wheel-carriage in deep clay. The Greeks very justly expressed the virtue we are now recommending, it being as your favorite philosopher [Aristotle] observes in his Ethics, the great preservative of the mind. He is certainly a very great enemy to his own understanding, who lives high and indulges himself in luxury. "A fat belly is seldom accompanied with any acute understanding." Nor is it my intention in this, only to warn you against drunkenness and luxury; I would willingly hope that such an advice would be superfluous to you: but, in this conflict, I would willingly carry you to such a pitch of victory, that, at your ordinary and least delicious meals, you would always stop some degrees within the bounds to which your appetite would carry you. Consider that, as Cato said, "the belly has no ears;" but it has a mouth, into which a bridle must be put, and therefore I address not myself to it, but to the directing mind that is set over it, which, for that reason, ought to govern the body with all its senses, and curb them at its pleasure. St. Bernard's words are admirable to this

purpose. "A prudent mind, devoted to God, ought so to act in its body, as the master of a family in his own house. He ought not to suffer his flesh to be, as Solomon expresses it, like a brawling woman, nor any carnal appetite to act like a rebellious servant; but to inure them to obedience and patience. He must not have his senses for his guides, but bring them into subjection and subserviency to reason and religion. He must, by all means, have his house and family so ordered and well disciplined, that he can say to one, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh, and to his servant the body, Do this, and it doeth what it is bid without murmuring. The body must also be treated with a little hardship, that it may not be disobedient to the mind." For he, saith Solomon, *that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child, shall have him become a (rebellious) son at last.* Prov. xxix. 21. This is what I would have you aspire to, a conquest over your flesh, and all its lusts; for they carry on a deadly war against your souls, and their desires are then most to be resisted, when they flatter most. What an unhappy and dishonorable inversion of nature it is, when the flesh commands, and the mind is in subjection; when the flesh, which is vile, gross, earthly, and soon to be the food of worms, governs the soul, that is the breath of God!

Another thing I would have you beware of, is, *immoderate speech*. The evils of the tongue are many: but the shortest way to find a way for them all, is to study silence, and avoid, as the poet expresses it, "excessive prating, and a vast desire of speaking."

He is a perfect man, as the Apostle James expresses it, *who offends not in word.* Jam. iii. 2. And therefore, doubtless, he that speaks least, offends in this respect more rarely. But, *in the multitude of words*, as the wise man observes, *there wants not sin.* Prov. x. 19. To speak much, and also to the purpose, seldom falls to the share of one man. Now, that we may avoid loquacity, we must love solitude, and render it familiar, that so every one may have an opportunity to speak much to himself, and little to other people. "We must, to be sure," says á Kempis, "be in charity with all men; but it is not expedient to be familiar with every one." General and indiscriminate conversation with every one we meet, is a mean and silly thing. Even when we promise ourselves comfort and satisfaction from free conversation, we often return from such interviews with uneasiness; or, at least, have spoken and heard such things as, upon serious reflection, may justly give us concern.

But, if we would secure our tongues and senses, or keep safe our hearts and all the issues of life, we must be frequent at prayer, in the morning, at noon, and at night, or oftener throughout the day, and continually walk as in the presence of God; always remem-

bering that He observes, not only our words and actions, but also takes notice of our most secret thoughts. This is the sum and substance of true piety; for he who is always sensible that that pure and all-seeing Eye is continually upon him, will never venture to sin with set purpose, or full consent of mind. This sense of the Divine presence, would certainly make our life on this earth like that of the angels; for, according to our Lord's expression, it is their peculiar advantage, *continually to behold the face of our Father who is in heaven*. By this means, Joseph escaped the snares laid for him by his imperious mistress; and, as if he had thrown water upon it, extinguished that fiery dart with this seasonable reflection, *Shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God*. Gen. xxxix. 9. He might have escaped the eyes of men, but he stood in awe of that Invisible Eye from which nothing can be hid. We read of a good man of old, who got the better of a temptation of the same kind, by the same serious consideration; for, being carried from one chamber to another by the woman that tempted him, he still demanded a place of greater secrecy, till having brought him to the most retired place of the whole house, Here, said she, no person will find us out, no eye can see us. To this he answered, Will no eye see? Will not that of God perceive us? By which saying, he himself escaped the snare, and by the influence of Divine grace, brought the sinful woman to repentance. But now,

*Let us Pray.*

Praise waits for Thee, O Lord, in Zion; and to be employed in paying Thee that tribute, is a becoming and pleasant exercise. It is due to Thee from all the works of Thy hands, but particularly proper from Thy saints and celestial spirits. Elevate, O Lord, our minds, that they may not grovel on the earth, and plunge themselves in the mire; but, being carried upwards, may taste the pleasures of thy house, that exalted house of Thine, the inhabitants whereof are continually singing Thy praises. Their praises add nothing to Thee; but they themselves are perfectly happy therein, while they behold Thy boundless goodness without any veil, admire thy uncreated beauty, and celebrate the praises thereof throughout all ages. Grant us, that we may walk in the paths of holiness, and, according to our measure, exalt Thy name even on this earth, until we also be translated into the glorious assembly of those who serve Thee in Thy higher house. Amen.

From an Exhortation to the Students on returning to the University after the vacation.

Whatever you do with regard to other studies, give always the preference to sacred Christian philosophy, which is, indeed, the



chief philosophy, and has the pre-eminence over every other science, because it holds Christ to be *The Head, in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid.* Col. ii. 3, 9. This, the Apostle tells us, was not the case of those false Christians in his time, whose philosophy regarded only some idle superstitions and vain observations. Cultivate, therefore, I say, this sacred wisdom sent down from Heaven. Let this be your main study; for its mysteries are the most profound, its precepts the most pure, and, at the same time, the most pleasant. In this study, a weak understanding will be no disadvantage, if you have but a willing mind and ardent desires. Here, if any where, the observation holds, "That if you love learning, you cannot fail to make great progress therein."\* For some who have applied with great industry to human philosophy, have found it to be like a disdainful mistress, and lost their labor; but Divine philosophy invites and encourages even those of the meanest parts.

And, indeed, it may be no small comfort and relief to young men of slow capacities, who make but little progress in human sciences, even when they apply to them with the most excessive labor and diligence, that this heavenly doctrine, though it be the most exalted in its own nature, is not only accessible to those of the lowest and meanest parts, but they are cheerfully admitted to it, graciously received, preferred to those that are proud of their learning, and very often advanced to higher degrees of knowledge therein; according to that of the Psalmist, *The law of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the entrance of His word giveth light; it giveth also understanding unto the simple.* Psal. cxix. 130. You, therefore, whom some very forward youths leave far behind in other studies, take courage; and to wipe off this stain, if it be one, and compensate this discouragement, make this your refuge: you cannot possibly arrive at an equal pitch of eloquence or philosophy with some others, but what hinders you, I pray, from being as pious, as modest, as meek and humble, as holy and pure in heart, as any other person whatever? And by this means, in a very short time, you will be completely happy in the enjoyment of God, and live forever in the blessed society of angels and spirits of just men made perfect.

But if you want to make a happy progress in this wisdom, you must, to be sure, declare war against all the lusts of the world and the flesh, which enervate your minds, weaken your strength, and deprive you of all disposition and fitness for imbibing this pure and immaculate doctrine. How stupid is it to catch so greedily at advantages so vanishing and fleeting in their nature, if, indeed, they can be called advantages at all; "advantages that are carried hither and thither, hurried from place to place by the uncertainty of their nature, and often fly away before they can be pos-

\* Isoc. ad Dem.

essed." An author remarkable for his attainments in religion, justly cries out, "O! what peace and tranquillity might he possess, who could be prevailed upon to cut off all vain anxiety, and only think of those things that are of a Divine and saving nature!" Peace and tranquillity is, without doubt, what we all seek after, yet, there are very few that know the way to it, though it be quite plain and open. It is, indeed, no wonder that the blind who wander about without a guide, should mistake the plainest and most open path; but we have an infallible guide, and a most valiant leader. Let us follow him alone; for he that treadeth in his steps, can never walk in darkness.

*Let us pray.*

O! invincible God, who seest all things! Eternal Light, before whom all darkness is light, and in comparison with whom, every other light is but darkness! The weak eyes of our understanding cannot bear the open and full rays of Thy inaccessible light; and yet, without some glimpses of that light from heaven, we can never direct our steps, nor proceed towards that country which is the habitation of light. May it therefore please Thee, O Father of lights, to send forth Thy light and Thy truth, that they may lead us directly to Thy holy mountain. Thou art good, and the fountain of goodness; give us understanding, that we may keep Thy precepts. That part of our past lives, which we have lost in pursuing shadows, is enough, and indeed too much: bring back our souls into the paths of life, and let the wonderful sweetness thereof, which far exceeds all the pleasures of this earth, powerfully, yet pleasantly, preserve us from being drawn aside therefrom by any temptation from sin or the world. Purify, we pray Thee, our souls from all impure imaginations, that Thy most beautiful and holy image may be again renewed within us, and, by contemplating Thy glorious perfections, we may feel daily improved within us that Divine similitude, the perfection whereof we hope will at last make us forever happy in that full and beatific vision we aspire after. Till this most blessed day break, and the shadows fly away, let Thy Spirit be continually with us, and may we feel the powerful effects of His Divine grace constantly directing and supporting our steps; that all our endeavors, not only in this society, but throughout the whole remaining part of our lives, may serve to promote the honor of Thy blessed name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

EXHORTATIONS TO THE CANDIDATES FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN THE UNIVER-  
SITY OF EDINBURGH.

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Exhortation 1st.

Were I allowed to speak freely what I sincerely think of most of the affairs of human life, even those that are accounted of the highest importance, and transacted with the greatest eagerness and bustle, I should be apt to say, *Magno conatu magnas nugas*,—that a great noise is made about trifles. But if you should take this amiss, as a little unseasonable upon the present occasion, and an insult upon your solemnity, I hope you will the more easily forgive me, that I place in the same rank with this philosophical convention of yours, the most famous councils and general assemblies of princes and great men; and say of their golden crowns, as well as your crowns of laurel, that they are things of no value, and not worth the purchasing. Even the triumphal, inaugural, or nuptial processions of the greatest kings and generals of armies, with whatever pomp and magnificence, as well as art, they may be set off, they are, after all, so far true representations of their false, painted, and tinsel happiness, that, while we look at them, they fly away; and, in a very short time, they are followed by their funeral processions, which are the triumphs of death over those who have, themselves, triumphed during their lives. The scenes are shifted, the actors also disappear; and, in the same manner, the greatest shows of this vain world likewise pass away. Let us, that we may lop off the luxuriant branches of our vines, take a nearer view of this object, and remember, that what we now call a laurel crown, will soon be followed by cypress wreaths. It will be also proper to consider how many, who, in their time, were employed as we are now, have long ago acted their parts, and are now consigned to a long oblivion; as also, what vast numbers of the rising generation are following us at the heels, and, as it were, pushing us forward to the same land of forgetfulness! who, while they are hurrying us away, are at the same time hastening thither themselves. All that we see, all that we do, and all that we are, are but mere dreams; and if we are not sensible of this truth, it is because we are still asleep: none but minds that are awake can discern it; they, and they only, can perceive and despise these *illusions* of the night. In the mean time, nothing hinders us from submitting to these, and other such customary formalities, provid-

ed our doing it interfere not with matters of much greater importance, and prospects of a different and more exalted nature. What is it, pray, to which with the most ardent wishes, you have been aspiring throughout the whole course of these last four years? Here you have a cap and a title, and nothing at all more.

But perhaps taking this amiss, you secretly blame me in your hearts, and wish me to congratulate you upon the honor you have obtained. I cheerfully comply with your desire, and am willing to explain myself. These small presents are not the principal reward of your labors, nor the chief end of your studies; but honorary marks and badges of that erudition and knowledge wherewith your minds have been stored by the uninterrupted labors of four whole years. But whatever attainments in learning you have reached, I would have you seriously to reflect, how inconsiderable they are, and how little they differ from nothing. Nay, if what we know, is compared with what we know not, it will be found even vastly less than nothing: at least, it is an argument of little knowledge, and the sign of a vain and weak mind, to be puffed up with an overbearing opinion of our own knowledge; while, on the contrary, it is an evidence of a great proficiency in knowledge to be sensible of our ignorance and inability. "He is the wisest man," says Plato, "who knows himself to be very ill qualified for the attainment of wisdom."\* Whatever be in this, we often find the sciences and arts which you cultivate, to be useless and entirely barren, with regard to the advantages of life; and, generally speaking, those other professions that are illiterate and illiberal, nay, even unlawful, meet with better treatment, and greater encouragement than what we call the liberal arts. "He that ventures upon the sea, is enriched by his voyages; he that engages in war, glitters with gold; the mean parasite lies drunk on a rich bed; and even he who endeavors to corrupt married women is rewarded for his villainy. Learning alone starves in tattered rags, and invokes the abandoned arts in vain."

But as sometimes the learned meet with a better fate, you, young gentlemen, I imagine, entertain better hopes with regard to your fortune, nor would I discourage them; yet, I would gladly moderate them a little by this wholesome advice; lean not upon a broken reed, neither let any one who values his peace, his real dignity, and his satisfaction, give himself up to hopes that are uncertain, frail, and deceitful. The human race are, perhaps, the only creatures that by this means become a torment to themselves; for, as we always grasp at futurity, we vainly promise ourselves many and great things, in which, as commonly happens, being for the most part disappointed, we must, of necessity, pay for our foolish pleasure with a proportionate degree of pain. Thus, the great-

\* Philo apol. Socr.



est part of mankind find the whole of this wretched life chequered with delusive joys and real torments, ill-grounded hopes and fears equally imaginary : amidst these, we live in continual suspense, and die so too.

But a few, alas ! a few only, yet some, who think more justly, having set their hearts upon heavenly enjoyments, take pleasure in despising with a proper greatness of mind, and trampling upon the fading enjoyments of this world. These make it their only study, and exert their utmost efforts that, having the more Divine part of their composition weaned from the world and the flesh, they may be brought to a resemblance and union with the holy and supreme God, the Father of spirits, by purity, piety, and an habitual contemplation of Divine objects. And this, to be sure, is the principal thing, with a noble ambition whereof I would have your minds inflamed ; and whatever profession or manner of life you devote yourselves to, it is my earnest exhortation and request, that you would make this your constant and principal study. Fly, if you have any regard to my advice, fly far from that controversial, contentious school-divinity, which, in fact, consists in fruitless disputes about words, and rather deserves the name of vain and foolish talking.

Almost all mankind are constantly catching at something more than they possess, and torment themselves in vain. Nor is our rest to be found among these enjoyments of the world, where all things are covered with a deluge of vanity, as with a flood of fluctuating, restless waters ; and the soul flying about, looking in vain for a place on which it may set its foot, most unhappily loses its time, its labor, and itself at last ; like the birds in the days of the Flood, which, " having long sought for land, till their strength was quite exhausted, fell down at last, and perished in the waters."

O ! how greatly preferable to these bushes, and briers, and thorns, are the delightful fields of the Gospel, wherein pleasure and profit are agreeably mixed together, whence you may learn the way to everlasting peace ; that poverty of spirit which is the only true riches, that purity of heart which is our greatest beauty, and that inexpressible satisfaction which attends the exercise of charity, humility, and meekness ! When your minds are stored and adorned with these graces, they will enjoy the most pleasant tranquillity, even amidst the noise and tumults of this present life ; and you will be, to use the words of Tertullian, *candidates for eternity* ; a title infinitely more glorious and sublime, than what has been this day conferred upon you. And that great and last day, which is so much dreaded by the slaves of this present world, will be the most happy and auspicious to you ; as it will deliver you from a dark, dismal prison, and place you in the regions of the most full and marvellous light.

*Let us pray.*

Most exalted God, who hast alone created, and dost govern this whole frame, and all the inhabitants thereof, visible and invisible, whose name is alone wonderful, and to be celebrated with the highest praise, as it is indeed above all praise and admiration. Let the heavens, the earth, and all the elements, praise Thee. Let darkness, light, all the returns of days and years, and all the varieties and vicissitudes of things, praise Thee. Let the angels praise Thee, the archangels, and all the blessed court of heaven, whose very happiness it is, that they are constantly employed in celebrating Thy praises. We confess, O Lord, that we are of all creatures the most unworthy to praise Thee, yet, of all others, we are under the greatest obligations to do it : nay, the more unworthy we are, our obligation is so much the greater. From this duty, however unqualified we may be, we can by no means abstain, nor, indeed, ought we. Let our souls bless Thee, and all that is within us praise Thy holy name, who forgivest all our sins, and healest all our diseases, who deliverest our souls from destruction, and crownest them with bounty and tender mercies. Thou searchest the heart, O Lord, and perfectly knowest the most intimate recesses of it : reject not those prayers which Thou perceivest to be the voice and the wishes of the heart. Now, it is the great request of our hearts, unless they always deceive us, that they may be weaned from all earthly and perishing enjoyments ; and if there is any thing to which they cleave with more than ordinary force, may they be pulled away from it by Thy Almighty hand, that they may be joined to Thee for ever in an inseparable marriage-covenant. And in our own behalf, we have nothing more to ask. We only add, in behalf of Thy Church, that it may be protected under the shadow of Thy wings, and every where, throughout the world, watered by Thy heavenly dew, that the spirit and heat of worldly hatred against it may be cooled, and its intestine divisions, whereby it is much more grievously scorched, extinguished. Bless this Nation, this City, and this University, in which we beg thou wouldest be pleased to reside, as in a garden dedicated to Thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Exhortation 3d.

This day, which has been the object of your earnest wishes, throughout the course of four whole years, is now almost over, and hastening to a close. What has it produced for your advantage ? Can he that has reaped most successfully of you all, say, he has filled his arms with sheaves ? Though possibly you would excuse me to express myself with great freedom on this occasion, yet, I will not take the liberty to depreciate too much your past studies,

the specimens you have given to-day of your abilities, and the degree that has been conferred upon you. This at least, I imagine, I may say, without offence, the most of those things we greedily catch at, and labor most earnestly to obtain, and consequently, even your philosophy is a real and demonstrative truth of that great paradox, *that there is a vacuity in the nature of things*. And, in truth, how great is this vacuity, seeing even the human race is no inconsiderable part of it! Though this day is marked with more than ordinary solemnity, it is, alter all, but the conclusion and period of a number of days that have been idly spent, and is itself elapsing to little or no purpose, as well as the rest. But O! how glorious must that blessed day be, which all purified souls, and such as are dear to God, earnestly long for, throughout the whole of this perishing life, and constantly wait, with a kind of impatience, until it dawn, and the shadows fly away.

I am, indeed, of opinion, that those of you who think most justly, will readily own, your attainments, hitherto, are of no great moment. But possibly, henceforth you intend to begin life, as it were, anew: you aspire to greater matters, and entertain views worthy of human nature; you already begin to live, and to be wise; you form desires, and conceive hopes of rising to arts, riches, and honors. All this is very well. Yet, there is one consideration, I would have you to admit among these ingenious projects and designs. What if death should come upon you, and, looking with an envious eye upon this towering prospect, put a stop to a project that extends itself so far into futurity, and, like a spider's web, entirely destroy it with a gentle breath of wind? Nor would this be any prodigy, or indeed an extraordinary event, but the common fate of almost all mankind. "We are always resolving to live, and yet never set about life in good earnest." Archimedes was not singular in his fate; but a great part of mankind die unexpectedly, while they are poring upon the figures they have described in the sand. O wretched mortals! who, having condemned themselves, as it were, to the mines, seem to make it their chief study to prevent their ever regaining their liberty. Hence, new employments are assumed in the place of old ones; and, as the Roman philosopher truly expresses it, "one hope succeeds another, one instance of ambition makes way for another; and we never desire an end of our misery, but only that it may change its outward form." When we cease to be candidates, and to fatigue ourselves in soliciting interest, we begin to give our votes and interest to those who solicit us in their turn. When we are wearied of the trouble of prosecuting crimes at the bar, we commence judges ourselves; and he who is grown old in the management of other men's affairs for money, is at last employed in improving his own wealth. At the age of fifty, says one, I will retire, and take my ease; or the sixtieth year of my life shall entirely disengage



me from public offices and business. Fool ! art thou not ashamed to reserve to thyself the last remains and dregs of life ? Who will stand surety that thou shalt live so long ? And what immense folly is it, so far to forget mortality, as to think of beginning to live at that period of years, to which a few only attain !

As for you, young gentlemen, I heartily wish you may think more justly. Let your souls, as it were, retire into themselves, and dwell at home ; and having shaken off the trifles that make a bustle and noise around you, consider seriously, that the remaining part of your life is long only in one respect, (and in this, indeed, its length may be justly complained of,) that it is fraught with every sort of misery and affliction, and has nothing agreeable in it, but the study of heavenly wisdom alone ; for every thing else is vanity. Look about you, and see, whether there is any thing worthy of your affection, and whether every thing you see, does not rather excite your indignation and aversion. At home, are contentions and disputes ; abroad in the fields, robbers ; clamor and noise at the bar ; wickedness in the camp ; hypocrisy in the church ; and vexation or lamentable mistakes every where. Among the rich and great, there are false and inconstant friendships, bitter enmities, envy, fraud, and falsehood ; and cares, in great numbers, flutter round the most stately and sumptuous palaces.

What a considerable part of mankind are struggling with open and sharp afflictions ! To whatever side you turn yourself, what do you commonly hear but lamentation and mourning ? How many complaints of the poor, that are distressed for want of daily bread, or drag a most wretched life under the grievous oppression of powerful tyrants ! How frequent are the groans of the sick and languishing. How great the multitude of those who lament their friends and relations carried off by death, and will themselves, in a short time, and for the same reason, be lamented by others ! And, to conclude, how innumerable are the miseries and afflictions of various kinds, that seem alternately to re-echo to one another ! Can it be any wonder, then, that a life of this kind should sometimes force, even from a wise man, such expressions of sorrow and concern as the following : " O mother, why didst thou bring me forth, to be oppressed with afflictions and sorrows ? Why didst thou introduce me into a life full of briers and thorns ? "

But you are now philosophers, and amidst these dismal calamities, you comfort yourselves with the inward and hidden riches of wisdom, and the sciences you have acquired. The sciences ! Tell us, in what part of the earth they are to be found. Let us know, pray, where they dwell, that we may flock thither in great numbers. I know, indeed, where there is abundance of noise, with vain and idle words, and a jarring of opinions between contending disputants ; I know, where ignorance, under the disguise of a gown and a beard, has obtained the title of science ; but, where



true knowledge is to be found, I know not. We grope in the dark, and though it is truth only we are in quest of, we fall into innumerable errors. But, whatever may be our case with respect to the knowledge of nature, as to that of heavenly and Divine things, let us cheerfully embrace that rich present which Infinite Goodness has made us, and be thankful, that the *day-spring from on high hath visited us*. "Because there was no wisdom on the earth," says Lactantius, "He sent a teacher from heaven." Him, let us follow as our guide : for he who follows his direction, *shall not walk in darkness*.

From Exhortation 4th.

A great part of mankind no sooner look upon themselves to be capable of worldly affairs, and think on entering upon some profession suitable to a state of manhood, but they are cut off, in the very beginning of their course, by an unforeseen and untimely death. And, to be sure, this is the great distemper of young, and even of old men, that, by their desires and designs, they launch out a great way into futurity, and form a series of projects for many years to come : while, in the mean time, they rarely or at least very superficially, consider, how foolish and precarious it is to depend upon to-morrow, and how soon this present form of ours may disappear ; how soon we may return to our original dust ; *and that very day*, as the royal prophet warns us, *our thoughts*, even the wisest and best concerted thoughts of the greatest men, and most exalted princes, *perish*. And this I take particular notice of, that no such illusion may get possession of your minds. For it is not the common sort of mankind only, that impose upon themselves in this respect, but the generality of those who desire to be accounted, not only men of learning, but also adepts in wisdom, and actually pass for such. Not that I would prohibit your making an early and prudent choice, under the Divine direction, of the employment and profession of life you intend to pursue ; nay, I would use every argument to persuade you to make use of such a choice, and when you have made it, to prosecute the intention of it with the greatest diligence and activity. I only put you upon your guard, not to entertain many and towering hopes in this world, nor to form a long series of connected projects ; because you will find them all more vain and fleeting than illusions of the night ! Some necessary means will fail, some favorable opportunity be missed ; after all industry, the expected event may not happen, or the thread of your life may be cut, and thereby all your projects be rendered abortive. And though your life should be drawn out to ever so great a length, and success constantly answer your expectations, yet, you know, and I wish you would remember it, the fatal day will come at last, perhaps when it is least

expected ; that fatal and final day, I say, will at last come, when we must leave all our enjoyments, and all our schemes, those we are now carrying on, and those we have brought to perfection, as well as those that are only begun, and those that subsist only in hopes and ideas.

And these very arguments, which have been used to confine your minds from indulging themselves in too remote prospects, will also serve to persuade you, in another sense, to look much farther ; not with regard to worldly enjoyments, for such prospects, strictly speaking, cannot be called long, but to look far beyond all earthly and perishing things, to those that are heavenly and eternal. And those that will not raise their eyes to such objects, as the Apostle Peter expresses it, *are blind, and cannot see afar off*.

But of you, my dear youths, I expect better things. I need not, I imagine, use many words to persuade you to industry, and a continual progress in human studies and philosophical learning. If the violence and infelicity of the times have deprived you of any part of that period of years usually employed in these studies at this university, you will surely repair that loss, as soon as possible, by your subsequent reading and application. But, if no such misfortune had happened, you are not, I believe, ignorant, that our schools are only intended for laying the foundations of those studies upon which, years, and indefatigable industry, are to raise the superstructure of more complete erudition : which, by the accession of the Divine Spirit, may be consecrated into a temple for God. And this is what I would recommend to your esteem, and your earnest desires, beyond any other study whatever, *That you may be holy, because our God is holy* : that, when you leave this university, those with whom you converse, may not find you puffed up with pride, on account of a little superficial learning, nor bigotted, talkative, or fond of entering into unseasonable disputes ; but consider you all as patterns and examples of piety, purity, temperance, modesty, and all Christian virtues ; particularly that humility which shone so brightly in Christ himself, and which he earnestly exhorts all his disciples to learn from him. I will not suspect, that any one of you will turn out to be an immodest person, a glutton, or drunkard, or in any shape, impious and profane ; but I earnestly exhort and beseech you, my dear young men, to make it, above all other things, your principal study, to have your hearts purged from all impure and ignoble love of the world and the flesh, that, in this earth you may live to God only ; and then, to be sure, when you remove out of it, you will live with Him for ever in heaven.

May the honorary title you have this day received be happy and auspicious ! But I earnestly pray the Father of Lights, that he would deign to bestow upon you a title more solid and exalted than it is in the power of man to give, that you may be called the

*sons of God*, and that your conversation may be suitable to so great a name, and so glorious a Father.

Exhortation 5th.

The complaint with regard to the variety of all perishing and transitory enjoyments, which has been long general among mankind, is indeed just and well-founded; but it is no less true, that the vanity which resides in the heart of man himself, exceeds every thing of that kind we observe in the other parts of the visible creation; for, amongst all the creatures that we see around us, we can find nothing so fleeting and inconstant; it flutters hither and thither, and forsaking that only perfect good which is truly suited to its nature and circumstances, grasps at phantoms and shadows of happiness, which it pursues with a folly more than childish.

Man wanders about on this earth; he hopes, he wishes, he seeks, he gropes and feels about him; he desires, he is hot, he is cold, he is blind, and complains that evil abounds every where; yet, he is himself the cause of those evils which rage in the world, but most of all in his own breast; and therefore, being tossed between the waves thereof, that roll continually within and without him, he leads a restless and disordered life, until he be at last swallowed up in the unavoidable gulf of death. It is, moreover, the shame and folly of the human race, that the greatest part of them do not resolve upon any fixed and settled method of life, but, like the brute creatures, live and die without design, and without proposing any reasonable end. For how few are there, who seriously and frequently consider with themselves, whence they come, whither they are going, and what is the purpose of their life: who are daily reviewing the state of their own minds, and often descend into themselves, that they may as frequently ascend, by their thoughts and meditations, to their exalted Father, and their heavenly country; who take their station upon temporal things, and view those that are eternal! Yet, these are the only men that can be truly said to live, and they alone can be accounted wise.

And to this it is, my dear youths, that I would willingly engage your souls; nay, I heartily wish they were carried thither by the fiery chariots of celestial wisdom. Let the common sort of mankind admire mean things; let them place their hopes on riches, honors, and arts, and spend their lives in the pursuit of them; but let your souls be inflamed with a far higher ambition. Yet, I would not altogether prohibit you these pursuits: I only desire you to be moderate in them. These enjoyments are neither great in themselves, nor permanent; but it is surprising, how much vanity is inflated by them. What a conceited, vain nothing is the creature we call man! For, because few are capable to discern

true blessings, which are solid and intrinsically beautiful, therefore the superficial ones, and such as are of no value at all, are caught at; and those who in any measure attain to the possession of them, are puffed up and elated thereby.

If we consider things as they are, it is an evidence of a very wrong turn of mind, to boast of titles and fame; as they are no part of ourselves, nor can we depend upon them. But he that is elevated with a fond conceit of his own knowledge, is a stranger to the nature of things, and particularly to himself; since he knows not that the highest pitch of human knowledge ought, in reality, rather to be called ignorance. How small and inconsiderable is the extent of knowledge! Even the most contemptible things in nature, are sufficient to expose the greatness of our ignorance. And with respect to Divine things, who dares to deny, that the knowledge mankind has of them is next to nothing? Because the weak eyes of our understanding, confined, as they are, within such narrow houses of clay, cannot bear the piercing light of Divine things; therefore, the Fountain of all wisdom hath thought proper to communicate such imperfect discoveries of Himself, as are barely sufficient to direct our steps to the superior regions of perfect light. And whoever believes this truth, will, doubtless, make it his chief care and principal study, constantly to follow this lamp of Divine light that shines in darkness, and not to deviate from it either to the right hand or the left. It is, indeed, my opinion, that no man of ingenuity ought to despise the study of philosophy, or the knowledge of languages, or grammar itself: though to be sure a more expeditious and successful method of teaching them were much to be wished. But what I would recommend with the greatest earnestness, and persuade you to, if possible, is, that you would inseparably unite with such measures of learning and improvement of your minds as you can attain, purity of religion, Divine love, moderation of soul, and an agreeable, inoffensive behavior. For you are not ignorant what a low and empty figure the highest attainments in human sciences must make, if they be compared with the dignity and duration of the soul of man: for, however considerable they may be in themselves, yet, with regard to their use, and their whole design, they are confined within the short space of this perishing life. But the soul, which reasons, which is employed in learning and teaching, in a few days will for ever bid farewell to all these things, and remove to another country. O, how inconsiderable are all arts and sciences, all eloquence and philosophy, when compared with a cautious concern that our last exit out of this world may be happy and auspicious, and that we may depart out of this life candidates for immortality, at which we can never arrive but by the beautiful way of holiness.



*Let us pray.*

Infinite and Eternal God ! who inhabitest thick darkness and light inaccessible, whom no mortal hath seen, or can see ; yet all Thy works evidently declare and proclaim Thy wisdom, Thy power, and thy infinite goodness : And, when we contemplate these Thy perfections, what is it our souls can desire, but that they may love Thee, worship Thee, serve Thee, for ever proclaim Thy praise, and celebrate Thy exalted name, which is above all praises, and all admiration ? Thy throne is constantly surrounded with thousands and ten thousands of glorified spirits, who continually adore Thee, and cry out without ceasing, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come.* Let others seek what they will, and find and embrace what they can ; may we have always this one fixed and settled purpose, that it is good for us to draw near to God. Let the seas roar, the earth be shaken, and all things go to ruin and confusion ; yet, the soul that adheres to God, will remain safe and quiet, and shall not be moved for ever. O blessed soul, that has Thee for its rest, and all its salvation ! It shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water ; it shall not fear when heat cometh, nor shall it be uneasy in the year of drought. It is our earnest petition and prayer, O Father, that Thy hands may loosen all our chains, and effectually deliver our souls from all the snares and allurements of the world and the flesh ; and that, by that same bountiful and most powerful hand of Thine, they may be for ever united to Thee through Thy only begotten Son, who is our union and our peace. Be favorably present, most gracious God, with this assembly of ours, that whatever we undertake, in obedience to Thy will, may be carried to perfection by the aid of Thy grace, and tend to the glory of Thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Exhortation 7th.

These academical exercises of ours are, to be sure, no great matter, nor do we make any high account of them ; yet, after all, we set no higher, perhaps even a less value upon the bustling affairs of mankind, which make a much greater noise, and the farces that are acted upon the more exalted theatres of the world : which, to speak my sentiments in a few words, are for the most part outwardly more pompous than these of ours, but inwardly equally vain, and more insignificant than the busy amusements of “children playing on the sands, and eagerly building little houses, which, with giddy levity, they instantly pull down again.” Or, if you chose to be more severe upon the fruitless labors of mankind, and their busy and irregular motions backward and forward, and from one place to another, you may, with a great man, who knew

all these things by experience, compare them to the *fluttering of frightened flies, the toilsome hurry of the ants, and the motions of puppets*. But he that, amidst all the confusions and commotions which happen in human affairs here below, has recourse to Divine contemplation and the hopes of eternity, as the lofty impregnable tower of true wisdom, "is the only person that enjoys uninterrupted ease and tranquillity, like the heavenly bodies, which constantly move on in their orbits, and are never, by any violence, diverted from their course."\*

And indeed, what wonder is it, that he can easily view all the dreadful appearances of this wretched life with a resolute and steady countenance, who, by frequent interviews and daily conversation with death itself, which we call the *king of terrors*, has rendered it familiar to him, and thereby not only divested it of its terrors, but also placed it in a beautiful, pleasant, and quite amiable light. By this means, he dies daily; and doubtless, before he suffers a natural death, he dies in a more exalted sense of the word, by withdrawing, as far as is possible, his mind from the encumbrance of earthly things, and even while it lodges in the body, weaning it from all the worldly objects that are placed about him. And, in this very sense, philosophy of old was most properly called the *meditation of death*, which the Roman orator has, in my opinion, explained with great propriety, and the precision of a philosopher. "What is it we do," says he, "when we withdraw the mind from pleasure, that is, the body, from our means and substance that is the servant of the body, that provides for its wants from the commonwealth, and every kind of business: what is it we then do, I say, but recall it to itself, and oblige it to stay at home? Now to withdraw the mind from the body, is nothing else but to learn to die." Let us, therefore, reason thus, if you will take my advice, and separate ourselves from our bodies; that is, let us accustom ourselves to die: this, even while we sojourn on this earth, will be to the soul a life like to that which it will enjoy in heaven; and, being delivered from these fetters, we shall move at a better rate, the course of our souls will be less retarded in our journey to that happy place, at which when we arrive, we can then, and then only, be truly said to live. For this life is but a kind of death, the miseries whereof I could paint, if it were seasonable; but, to be sure, it was most justly called *a life of the greatest misery* by Dionysius the Areopagite, or whoever was the author of that book which goes under his name.

And indeed, young gentlemen, I am of opinion, that such a view and meditation of death, will not be unsuitable, or improper, even for you, though you are in the prime of life, and your minds in their full vigor: nay, I would gladly hope, you yourselves will

\* Luc. lib. ii.

not imagine it would, nor be at all offended at me, as if, by mentioning that inauspicious word unseasonably, I disturbed your present joy, drew a kind of black cloud over this bright day of festivity, or seem to mix among your laurels, a branch of the hated cypress. For a wise man would not willingly owe his joy to madness, nor think it a pleasure, foolishly to forget the situation of his affairs.

The wise man alone feels true joy : and real wisdom is the attainment of a Christian only, who bears with life, but hopes for death, and passes through all the storms and tempests of the former with an undauntedness of mind, but with the most fervent wishes, looks for the latter as the secure port and the *fair havens* in the highest sense of the expression ; whose mind is humble, and, at the same time, exalted, neither depending upon foreign, that is, external advantages, nor puffed up with his own ; and neither elevated nor depressed by any turns or vicissitude of fortune.

He is the wise man, who relishes things as they really are ; who is not, with the common sort of mankind, that are always children, terrified by bug-bears, nor pleased with painted rattles : who has a greatness of soul, vastly superior to all fading and perishing things ; who judges of his improvements by his life, and thinks he knows every thing he does not covet, and every thing he does not fear. The only thing he desires, is the favor and countenance of the Supreme King ; the only thing he fears, is His displeasure. And, without doubt, a mind of this cast must, of necessity, be the habitation of constant serenity, exalted joy, and gladness springing from on high. And this is the man, that is truly possessed of that tranquillity and happy disposition of mind, which the Philosophers boast of, the Divines recommend, but few attain. And though he will neither willingly suffer himself to be called a philosopher, nor a philologist, yet he is, in reality, well versed in the things of God, and, by a kind of Divine influence and instruction, has attained to the light of pure and peaceable truth : where he passes his days in the greatest quietness and serenity, far above the cloudy and stormy regions of controversy and disputation.

If any one of you has been thus instructed, he has certainly attained the highest of all arts, and has entered upon the most glorious liberty, even before he hath received any University degree. But the rest, though they are presently to have the title of Master of Arts, still continue a silly, servile set of men, under a heavy yoke of bondage, whereby even their minds will be cramped with oppressive laws, far more intolerable than any discipline however severe. None of you, I imagine, is so excessively blinded with self-conceit, so ignorant of the nature of things, and unacquainted with himself, as to dream that he is already a philosopher, or be puffed up with an extravagant opinion of his own knowledge, because he has gone through the ordinary exercises at the Universi-

ty; though, to speak the truth, the philosophy which prevails in the schools, is of a vain, airy nature, and more apt to inspire the mind with pride, than to improve it. As it is my earnest prayer, so it is also the object of my hope, that you will retire from this Seminary, with your minds excited to a keen and wholesome thirst after true erudition, rather than blown up with the wild-fire of science, falsely so called; and what, above all other attainments, is of greatest consequence, that you will leave us, deeply affected with the most ardent love of heavenly wisdom. Whatever may be your fate with respect to other things, it is my earnest request, that it be your highest ambition, and your principal study, to be true Christians; that is, to be humble, meek, pure, holy, and followers of your most auspicious Captain, the Lamb, wherever he goeth. For he that followeth him, shall not walk in darkness, but be conducted, through the morning light of Divine grace, to the meridian and never-ending brightness of glory.

Exhortation 8th.

Amidst these amusements, we are unhappily losing a day. Yet, some part of the weight of this complaint is removed when we consider, that, while the greatest part of mankind are bustling in crowds and places of traffic, or, as they would have us believe, in affairs of great importance, we are trifling our time more innocently than they. But what should hinder us from closing this last scene in a serious manner, that is, from turning our eyes to more Divine objects, whereby, though we are fatigued with other matters, we may terminate the work of this day, and the day itself, agreeably; as the beams of the sun use to give more than ordinary delight, when he is near his setting?

You are now initiated into the philosophy, such as it is, that prevails in the schools, and, I imagine, intend, with all possible despatch, to apply to higher studies. But O! how pitiful and scanty are all those things which beset us before, behind, and on every side! The bustling we observe, is nothing but the hurrying of ants eagerly engaged in their little labors. The mind must surely have degenerated, and forgotten its original as effectually as if it had drank of the river Lethe, if, extricating itself out of all these mean concerns and designs, as so many snares laid for it, and rising above the whole of this visible world, it does not return to its Father's bosom, where it may contemplate His eternal beauty, where contemplation will inflame love, and love be crowned with the possession of the beloved object. But, in the contemplation of this glorious object, how great caution and moderation of mind is necessary, that, by prying presumptuously into His secret councils or His nature, and rashly breaking into the *sanctuary of light*, we be not quite involved in darkness! And, with



regard to what the infinite, independent, and necessarily existent Being has thought proper to communicate to us concerning Himself, and we are concerned to know, even that is by no means to be obscured with curious impertinent questions, nor perplexed with the arrogance of disputation; because, by such means, instead of enlarging our knowledge, we are in the fair way to know nothing at all; but readily to be received by humble faith, and entertained with meek and pious affections. And if, in these notices of Him that are communicated to us, we meet with any thing obscure and hard to be understood, such difficulties would be happily got over, not by perplexed controversies, but by constant and fervent prayer. "He will come to understand," says admirably well the famous Bishop of Hippo, [Augustine] "who knocks by prayer; not he who, by quarrelling, makes a noise at the gate of truth." But what can we, who are mortal creatures, understand with regard to the inexpressible Being we now speak of, especially while we sojourn in these dark prisons of clay, but only this, that we can by no means comprehend Him? For though, in thinking of Him, we remove from our idea all sort of imperfection, and collect together every perceivable perfection, and adorn the whole with the highest titles, we must, after all, acknowledge, that we have said nothing, and that our conceptions are nothing to the purpose. Let us, therefore, in general acknowledge Him to be the Immoveable Being that moveth every thing, the Immutable God that changeth all things at His pleasure, the Infinite and Eternal Fountain of all good and of all existence, and the Lord and sole Ruler of the world.

If you then, my dear youths, aspire to genuine Christianity, that is, the knowledge of God and Divine things, I would have you consider that the mind must first be recalled and engaged to turn in upon itself, before it can be raised up towards God: according to that expression of St. Bernard, "May I return from external things, to those that are within myself, and from these again rise to those that are of a more exalted nature." But the greatest part of men live abroad, and are truly strangers at home: you may sooner find them any where than with themselves. Now, is this not real madness, and the highest degree of insensibility? Yet after all, they seem to have some reason in their madness, when they thus stray away from themselves, since they can see nothing within them, that by its promising aspect can give them pleasure or delight. Every thing there is ugly, frightful, and full of nastiness, which they would rather be ignorant of, than be at the pains to purge away; and therefore prefer a slothful forgetfulness of their misery, to the trouble and labor of regaining happiness. But how preposterous is the most diligent study, and the highest knowledge, when we neglect that of ourselves! The Roman philosopher, ridiculing the grammarians of his time, observes, "that they

inquired narrowly into the misfortunes of Ulysses, but were quite ignorant of their own." The sentiments of a wise and pious man are quite different, and I wish you may adopt them. It is his principal care to be thoroughly acquainted with himself; he watches over his own ways, he improves and cultivates his heart as a garden consecrated to the King of kings, who takes particular delight in it; he carefully nurses the heavenly plants and flowers, and roots up all the wild and noxious weeds, that he may be able to say with the greater confidence, *Let my beloved come into his own garden, and be pleased to eat of his fruits.* And when, upon this invitation, the great King, in the fulness of His goodness, descends into the mind, the soul may then easily ascend with Him, as it were, in a chariot of fire, and look down upon the earth, and all earthly things, with contempt and disdain. "Then, rising above the rainy regions, it sees the storms falling beneath its feet, and tramples upon the hidden thunder."

*Let us pray.*

Whatever satisfaction we look for without Thee, O Heavenly Father, is mere delusion and vanity. Yet, though we have so often experienced this, we have not, to this day, learned to renounce this vain and fruitless labor, that we may depend upon Thee, who alone canst give full and complete satisfaction to the souls of men. We pray, therefore, that, by Thy Almighty hand, Thou wouldst so effectually join and unite our hearts to Thee, that they may never be separated any more. How unhappy are they who forsake Thee, and whose hearts depart from Thy ways! They shall be like shrubs in the desert; they shall not see when good cometh, but dwell in a parched and barren land. Blessed, on the contrary, is he who hath placed his confidence in Thee: he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water; he shall not be afraid when heat cometh, nor be uneasy in the time of drought. Take from us, O Lord, whatever earthly enjoyments Thou shalt think proper; there is one thing will abundantly make up all our losses; let Christ dwell in our hearts by faith, and the rays of thy favor continually refresh us in the face of this Thine anointed; in this event, we have nothing to ask, but with grateful minds shall for ever celebrate Thy bounty, and all our bones shall say, Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, who is like unto Thee?

Let Thy Church be glad in Thee, and all in this Nation, and every where throughout the world, who regard and love Thy name. By the power and efficacy of the gospel, may their number be daily augmented, and let the gifts of Thy grace be also increased in them all. Bless this University; let it be like a garden watered by Thy heavenly hand, that Thy tender shoots may grow, and in due time produce abundant fruits, to the eternal honor of Thy most glorious name, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

## VALEDICTORY ORATION.

Though this, I imagine, is the last address I shall ever have occasion to make to you, I will not detain you long from your studies, nor encroach on the time allowed you for recreation. This is, to be sure, the first time that some of you have heard me ; but I have a great many others to bear witness of the constant design of all my dissertations in this place. They will testify, that the intention of all my discourses was, *that the form of sound words*, that is, the Christian doctrine, and consequently the fear and love of God, might not only be impressed, but also engraven upon your hearts in lasting and indelible characters ; and that you might not only admit as a truth, but also pay the highest regard to this indisputable maxim, "That piety and religion is the only real good among men." Moreover, that your minds might be the less encumbered in their application to this grand study of religion, and the more expeditious in their progress therein, I constantly endeavored, with all possible warmth, to divert you from those barren and thorny questions and disputes that have infected the whole of theology ; and this at a time when the greatest part of divines and professors, and those of no small reputation, engaging furiously in such controversies, have split into parties, and unhappily divided the whole world. It was my constant practice to establish those great and uncontroverted articles of our holy religion, which are but few and clear : some part whereof are confirmed by the common consent of nations, and of all the human race ; and all the rest, by the unanimous voice of the whole Christian world. Of the first sort are those we have often advanced in treating of the being and perfections of the One Supreme and Eternal principle, and the production of all things by Him ; the continual preservation and government of the world by His providence ; the law of God given to mankind, and the rewards and punishments annexed to it. The other class of the grand articles of religion, are indeed peculiar to Christian Philosophy, but believed in common by all the professors of that religion. These are the great foundations of our faith, and of all our hope and joy, with regard to the incarnation of the Son of God, his death and resurrection for the destruction of sin, and consequently of death ; his ascension into the highest heavens with that same flesh of ours in which he died, and his exaltation there above all ranks of angels, dominions, and thrones, &c. ; whence we expect he will return in great glory in that day, when he will be glorious in all his saints, and admired in those that believe. As many, therefore, as desire to

receive him in this last manifestation, with joy and exultation, must of necessity be holy, and, in conformity to their most perfect and glorious Head, sober, pious, upright, and live in full contempt of this perishing transitory world, their own mortal flesh, and the sordid pleasures of both: in a word all the enjoyments which the mean and servile admire, they must trample under foot and despise. For, whoever will strive for this victory, and strive so as at last to obtain it, the Lord will own for his servant, and the great Master will acknowledge him for his disciple. He will attain a likeness to God in this earth, and, after a short conflict, will triumph in the Divine presence for ever. These are the doctrines which it is our interest to know, and in the observation of which our happiness will be secured. To these you will turn your thoughts, young gentlemen, if you are wise; nay, to these you ought to give due attention, that you may be wise. Those phantoms we catch at, fly away; this shadow of a life we now live, is likewise on the wing. Those things that are without the verge of sense, and above its reach, are the only solid and lasting enjoyments. "Why are ye fond of these earthly things," says St. Bernard, "which are neither true riches, nor are they yours? If they are yours," continues he, "take them with you." And Lactantius admirably well observes, that "Whoever prefers the life of the soul, must of necessity despise that of the body; nor can he aspire to the highest good, unless he despise advantages of an inferior kind. For the all-wise God did not choose that we should attain to immortality in a soft indolent way, but that we should gain that inexpressible reward of eternal life, with the highest difficulty and severest labor." And that you may not be discouraged, remember the great Redeemer of souls, your exalted Captain, hath gone before you, and we have to do with an enemy already conquered. Let us only follow him with courage and activity, and we have no ground to doubt of victory. And indeed it is a victory truly worthy of a Christian, to subdue the barbarous train of our appetites, and subject them to the empire of reason and religion: while on the other hand, it is the most shameful bondage, to have the more Divine part of our composition meanly subjected to an ignoble, earthly body. Now, this victory can only be secured by steadfast believing, vigorous opposition to our spiritual enemies, unwearied watching, and incessant prayer. Let prayer be not only the key that opens the day, and the lock that shuts out the night; but let it be also, from morning to night, our staff and stay in all our labors, and enable us to go cheerfully up into the mount of God. Prayer brings consolation to the languishing soul, drives away the devil, and is the great medium whereby all grace and peace is communicated to us. With regard to your reading, let it be your particular care to be familiarly acquainted with the Sacred Scriptures above all other books whatever; for from thence you will



truly derive light for your direction, and sacred provisions for your support on your journey. In subordination to these, you may also use the writings of pious men that are agreeable to them, for these also you may improve to your advantage; and particularly that little Book of à Kempis, *De Imitatione Christi*, since the sum and substance of religion consists in imitating the Being, that is the object of your worship.

May our dear Redeemer Jesus impress upon your minds a lively representation of his own meek and immaculate heart, that, in that great and last day, he may, by this mark, know you to be his; and, together with all the rest of his sealed and redeemed ones, admit you into the mansions of eternal bliss! Amen.

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### RULES AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR A HOLY LIFE.

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For disposing you the better to observe these rules, and profit by them, be pleased to take the following advices:—

1. Put all your trust in the special and singular mercy of God, that He for His mercy's sake, and of His only goodness, will help and bring you to perfection. Not that absolute perfection is attainable here, but the meaning is, to high degrees of that spiritual and divine life, which is always growing and tending towards the absolute perfection above; but in some persons comes nearer to that and riseth higher, even here, than in the most. If you with hearty and fervent desires do continually wish and long for it, and with most humble devotion daily pray unto God, and call for it, and with all diligence do busily labor and travail to come to it, undoubtedly it shall be given you. For you must not think it sufficient to use exercises, as though they had such virtues in them, that, of themselves alone, they could make such as do use them perfect; for neither those nor any other, whatever they be, can of themselves (by their use only) bring unto perfection. But our merciful Lord God, of His own goodness, when you seek with hearty desires and fervent sighings, maketh you to find it. When you ask daily with devout prayer, then He giveth it to you; and when you continually, with unwearyed labor and travail, knock perseveringly, then he doth mercifully open unto you. And because those exercises do teach you to seek, ask, and knock, yea, they are none other than very devout petitions, seekings, and spiritual pulsations for the merciful help of God; therefore they are very profitable means to come to perfection by God's grace.

2. Let no particular exercise hinder your public and standing duties to God and your neighbors : but for these, rather intermit the other for a time, and then return to it as soon as you can.

3. If, in time of your spiritual exercise, you find yourself drawn to any better, or to as good a contemplation as that is, follow the track of that good motion so long as it shall last.

4. Always take care to follow such exercises of devout thoughts, withal putting in practice such lessons as they contain and excite to.

5. Though at first ye feel no sweetness in such exercises, yet be not discouraged, nor induced to leave them, but continue in them faithfully, whatsoever pain or spiritual trouble ye feel ; for, doing them for God and His honor, and finding none other present fruit, yet you shall have an excellent reward for your diligent labor and your pure intentions. And let not your falling short of these models and rules, nor your daily manifold imperfections and faults, dishearten you ; but continue steadfast in your desires, purposes, and endeavors ; and ever ask the best, aim at the best, and hope the best, being sorry that you can do no better ; and they shall be a most acceptable sacrifice in the sight of God, *and in due time you shall reap if you faint not.* And of all such instructions let your rule be, to follow them as much as you can ; but not too scrupulously thinking your labor lost if you do not exactly and strictly answer them in every thing. Purpose still better, and by God's grace all shall be well.

## SECTION I.

RULE 1. Exercise thyself in the knowledge and deep consideration of our Lord God, calling humbly to mind how excellent and incomprehensible He is ; and this knowledge shalt thou rather endeavor to obtain by fervent desire and devout prayer, than by high study and outward labor. It is the singular gift of God, and certainly very precarious.

2. Pray, then, " Most gracious Lord, whom to know is the very bliss and felicity of man's soul, and yet none can know Thee, unless Thou wilt open and show Thyself unto him ; vouchsafe, of Thy infinite mercy now and ever, to enlighten my heart and mind to know Thee, and Thy most holy and perfect will, to the honor and glory of Thy name. Amen."

3. Then lift up thy heart to consider (not with too great violence, but soberly) the eternal and infinite power of God, who has created all things by His excellent wisdom ; His unmeasurable goodness, and incomprehensible love : for He is very and only God, most excellent, most high, most glorious, the everlasting and unchangeable goodness, an eternal substance, a charity infinite, so excellent and ineffable in Himself, that all dignity, perfection,

and goodness, that is possible to be spoken or thought of, cannot sufficiently express the smallest part thereof.

4. Consider that He is the natural place, the centre and rest of thy soul. If thou then think of the most blessed Trinity, muse not too much thereon, but with devout and obedient faith, meekly and lowly adore and worship.

5. Consider Jesus the Redeemer and Husband of thy soul, and walk with him as becomes a chaste spouse, with reverence and lowly shamefulness, obedience, and submission.

6. Then turn to the deep, profound consideration of thyself, thine own nothingness, and thy extreme defilement and pollution, thy natural aversion from God, and that thou must, by conversion to Him again, and union with Him, be made happy.

7. Consider thyself and all creatures as nothing, in comparison of thy Lord; that so thou mayest not only be content, but desirous to be unknown, or being known, to be contemned and despised of all men, yet without thy faults or deservings, as much as thou canst.

8. Pray: "O God infuse into my heart Thy heavenly light and blessed charity, that I may know and love Thee above all things; and above all things loath and abhor myself. Grant that I may be so ravished in the wonder and love of Thee, that I may forget myself and all things; feel neither prosperity nor adversity; may not fear to suffer all the pains of this world, rather than to be parted and pulled away from Thee, whose perfections infinitely exceed all thought and understanding. O! let me find Thee more inwardly and verily present with me, than I am with myself; and make me most circumspect how I do use myself in the presence of Thee, my holy Lord.

"Cause me always to remember how everlasting and constant is the love Thou bearest towards me, and such a charity and continual care, as though thou hadst no more creatures in heaven or earth besides me. What am I? A vile worm and filth."

9. Then aspire to a great contrition for thy sins, and hatred of them, an abhorring of thyself for them; then crave pardon in the blood of Jesus Christ; and then offer up thyself, soul and body, an oblation or sacrifice, in and through him; as they did of old, laying wood on the altar, and then burning up all: so this shall be a sacrifice of sweet savor, and very acceptable to God.

10. Offer all that thou hast, to be nothing, to use nothing of all that thou hast about thee and is called thine, but to His honor and glory; and resolve through His grace to use all the powers of thy soul, and every member of thy body, to His service, as formerly thou hast done to sin.

11. Consider the passion of thy Lord, how he was buffeted, scourged, reviled, stretched with nails on the cross, and hung on

it three long hours : suffered all the contempt and shame, and all the inconceivable pain of it, for thy sake.

12. Then turn thy heart to Him, humbly saying, " Lord Jesus, whereas I daily fall, and am ready to sin, vouchsafe me grace as oft as I shall, to rise again ; let me never presume, but always most meekly and humbly acknowledge my wretchedness and frailty, and repent, with a firm purpose to amend ; and let me not despair because of my great frailty, but ever trust in Thy most loving mercy and readiness to forgive."

## SECTION II.

1. Thou shalt have much to do in mortifying of thy five senses, which must be all shut up in the crucified humility of Jesus Christ, and be as they were plainly dead.

2. Thou must now learn to have a continual eye inwardly to thy soul and spiritual life, as thou hast used heretofore to have all thy mind and regard to outward pleasure and worldly things.

3. Thou must submit and give thyself up unto the discipline of Jesus, and become his scholar, resigning and compelling thyself altogether to obey him in all things ; so that thy willing and nilling thou utterly and perfectly do cast away from thee, and do nothing without his license : at every word thou wilt speak, at every morsel thou wilt eat, at every stirring or moving of every article or member of thy body, thou must ask leave of him in thy heart, and ask thyself whether, having so done, that be according to his will and holy example, and with sincere intention of his glory. Hence,

4. Even the most necessary actions of thy life, though lawful, yet must thus be offered up with a true intention unto God, in the union of the most holy works, and blessed merits of Christ ; saying, " Lord Jesus, bind up in the merits of thy blessed senses, all my feeling and sensation, and all my wits and senses, that I never hereafter use them to any sensuality."

5. Thus labor to come to this union and knitting up of thy senses, in God and thy Lord Jesus, and remain so fast to the cross, that thou never part from it, and still behave thy body and all thy senses as in the presence of thy Lord God, and commit all things to the most trusty providence of thy loving Lord, who will then order all things delectably and sweetly for thee. Reckon all things besides for right nought ; and thus mayest thou come unto wonderful illuminations and spiritual influence from the Lord thy God.

6. If, for his love, thou canst crucify, renounce, and forsake perfectly thyself and all things, thou must so crucify thyself to all things, and love and desire God only, with thy care and whole heart, that in this most steadfast and strong knot and union unto the will of God, if He would create hell in thee here, thou might-



est be ready to offer thyself, by His grace, for His eternal honor and glory, to suffer it, and that purely for His will and pleasure.

7. Thou must keep thy memory clean and pure, as it were a wedlock chamber, from all strange thoughts, fancies, and imaginations; and it must be trimmed and adorned with holy meditations and virtues of Christ's life and passion, that God may continually and ever rest therein.

#### A PRAYER.

8. "Lord, instead of knowing Thee, I have sought to know wickedness and sin; and whereas my will and desire were created to love Thee, I have lost that love, and declined to the creatures. While my memory ought to be filled with Thee, I have painted it with the imagery of innumerable fancies, not only of all creatures, but of all sinful wickedness. Oh! blot out these by Thy blood, and imprint Thy own blessed image in my soul, blessed Jesus, by that blood that issued out from Thy most loving heart, when Thou hangedst on the cross. So knit my will to Thy most holy will, that I may have no other will but Thine, and may be most heartily and fully content with whatsoever Thou wouldst do to me in this world: yea, if Thou wilt, so that I hate Thee not, nor sin against Thee, but retain Thy love, make me suffer the greatest pains."

### SECTION III.

**RULE 1.** Exercise thyself to the perfect abnegation of all things which may let or impede this union. Mortify in thee every thing that is not of God, nor for God, or which He willeth and loveth not. Resigning and yielding up to the high pleasure of God, all love and affection for transitory things, desire neither to have nor hold them, nor bestow nor give them, but only for the pure love and honor of God. Put away superfluous and unnecessary things, and affect not even things necessary.

2. Mortify all affection to, and seeking of, thyself, which is so natural to men in all the good they desire, and in all the good they do, and in all the evil they suffer: yea, by the inordinate love of the gifts and graces of God, instead of Himself, they fall into spiritual pride, gluttony, and greediness.

3. Mortify all affection to, and delectation in, meat and drink, and vain thoughts and fancies, which, though they proceed not to consent, yet defile the soul, and grieve the Holy Ghost, and do great damage to the spiritual life.

4. Imprint on thy heart the image of Jesus crucified, the impressions of his humility, poverty, mildness, and all his holy virtues: let thy thoughts of him turn into affection, and thy knowledge into love. For the love of God doth most purely work in

the mortification of nature: the life of the spirit, purifying the higher powers of the soul, begets the solitariness and departure from all creatures, and the influence and flowing into God.

5. Solitude, silence, and the strict keeping of the heart, are the foundations and grounds of a spiritual life.

6. Do all thy necessary and outward works without any trouble or carefulness of mind, and bear thy mind amidst all always inwardly lifted up and elevated to God, following always more the inward exercise of love, than the outward acts of virtue.

7. To this can no man come, unless he be rid and delivered from all things under God, and be so swallowed up in God, that he can condemn and despise himself and all things; for the pure love of God maketh the spirit pure and simple, and so free, that, without any pain and labor, it can at all times turn and recollect itself in God.

8. Mortify all bitterness of heart towards thy neighbors, and all vain complacency in thyself, all vain glory and desire of esteem, in words and deeds, in gifts and graces. To this thou shalt come by a more clear and perfect knowledge and consideration of thy own vileness, and by knowing God to be the fountain of all grace and goodness.

9. Mortify all affection towards inward, sensible, spiritual delight in grace, and the following devotion with sensible sweetness in the lower faculties or powers of the soul, which are nowise real sanctity and holiness in themselves, but certain gifts of God to help our infirmity.

10. Mortify all curious investigation or search, all speculation and knowledge of unnecessary things, human or divine; for the perfect life of a Christian consisteth not in a high knowledge, but profound meekness, in holy simplicity, and in the ardent love of God; wherein we ought to desire to die to all affection to ourselves and all things below God: yea, to sustain pain and dereliction, that we may be perfectly knit and united to God, and be perfectly swallowed up in Him.

11. Mortify all undue scrupulousness of conscience, and trust in the goodness of God: for our doubting and scruples oft times arise from inordinate self-love, and therefore vex us; they do no good, neither work any real amendment in us: they cloud the soul, and darken faith, and cool love; and it is only the stronger beams of these that can despel them. And the stronger that faith and Divine confidence is in us, and the hotter Divine love is, the soul is so much the more excited and enabled to all the parts of holiness, to mortifications of passions and lusts, to more patience in adversity, and to more thankfulness in all estates.

12. Mortify all impatience in all pains and troubles, whether from the hands of God or men, all desire of revenge, all resent-

ment of injuries : and by the pure love of God, love thy very persecutors as if they were thy dearest friends.

13. Finally, Mortify thy own will in all things, with full resignation of thyself to suffer all dereliction, outward and inward, all pain, and pressures, and desolations, and that for the pure love of God : for from self-love and self-will spring all sin and all pain.

#### A PRAYER.

14. "O Jesus, my Saviour ! thy blessed humility, impress it on my heart. Make me most sensible of thy infinite dignity, and of my own vileness, that I may hate myself as a thing of nought, and be willing to be despised and trodden upon by all as the vilest mire of the streets ; that I may still retain these words,—**I AM NOTHING, I HAVE NOTHING, I CAN DO NOTHING, AND I DESIRE NOTHING BUT ONE.**"

#### SECTION IV.

1. Never do any thing with propriety and singular affection, being too earnest, or too much given to it ; but with continual meekness of heart and mind, lie at the foot of God, and say, "Lord, I desire nothing, neither in myself, nor in any creature, save only to know and execute Thy blessed will." Saying alway in thy heart, "Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do ? Transform my will into Thine : fill full, and swallow up as it were, my affections with Thy love, and with an insatiable desire to honor Thee, and despise myself."

2. If thou aspire to attain to the perfect knitting and union with God, know that it requireth a perfect expoliation, and denudation, or bare nakedness, and utter forsaking of all sin, yea of all creatures, and of thyself particularly : even that thy mind and understanding, thy affections and desires, thy memory and fancy, be made bare of all things in the world, and all sensual pleasures in them, so as thou wouldst be content that the bread which thou eatest had no more savor than a stone, and yet, for his honor and glory that created bread, thou art pleased that it savoreth well : but yet, from the delectation thou feelest in it, turn thy heart to His praises, and love that made it.

3. The more perfectly thou livest in the abstraction, and departure, and bare nakedness of thy mind from all creatures, the more nakedly and purely shalt thou have the fruition of the Lord thy God, and shalt live the more heavenly and angelical life.—Therefore,

4. Labor above all things most exactly to forsake all for Him ; and chiefly to forsake and condemn thyself ; purely loving Him, and in a manner forgetting thyself and all things, for the vehement burning love of Him : thus thy mind will run so much upon

Him, that thou wilt take no heed what is sweet or bitter, neither wilt thou consider time or place, nor mark one person from another, for the wonder and love of Thy Lord God, and the desire of his blessed will, pleasure, and honor in all things. And whatsoever good thou dost, know and think that God doth it, and not thou.

5. Choose always (to the best of thy skill) what is most to God's honor, and most like unto Christ and his example, and most profitable to thy neighbor, and most against thy own proper will, and least serviceable to thy own praise and exaltation.

6. If thou continue faithful in this spiritual work and travail, God at length, without doubt, will hear thy knocking, and will deliver thee from all thy spiritual trouble, from all the tumults, noise, and incumbrance of cogitations and fancies, and from all earthly affections, which thou canst by no better means put away, than by continual and fervent desire of the love of God.

7. Do not at any time let or hinder His working, by following thine own will; for behold how much thou dost the more perfectly forsake thine own will, and the love of thyself, and of all worldly things, so much the more deeply and safely shalt thou be knit unto God, and increase in His true and pure love.

## SECTION V.

1. If thou still above all things seek that union, thou must transfund and pour thy whole will into the high pleasure of God; and whatsoever befalls thee, thou must be without murmuring and retraction of heart, accepting it most joyfully for His love whose will and work it is.

2. Let thy great joy and comfort evermore be, to have His pleasure done in thee, though in pains, sickness, persecutions, oppressions, or inward griefs and pressures of heart, coldness or barrenness of mind, darkening of thy will and senses, or any temptations, spiritual or bodily. And,

3. Under any of these, be always wary thou turn not to sinful delights, nor to sensual and carnal pleasures, nor set thy heart on vain things, seeking comfort thereby, nor in any wise be idle, but, always as thou canst, compel and force thyself to some good spiritual exercise or bodily work; and though they be then unsavory to thee, yet are they not the less, but the more, acceptable to God.

4. Take all afflictions as tokens of God's love to thee, and trials of thy love to Him, and purposes of kindness to enrich thee, and increase more plentifully in thee His blessed gifts and spiritual graces, if thou persevere faithfully unto the end; not leaving off the vehement desire of His love and thy own perfection.

5. Offer up thyself wholly to Him, and fix the point of thy love upon His most blessed increased love; and there let thy soul and heart rest and delight, and be as it were resolved and melted most



happily into the blessed Godhead ; and then take that as a token, and be assured by it, that God will grant thy lovely and holy desire. Then shalt thou feel in a manner no difference betwixt honor and shame, joy and sorrow ; but whatsoever thou perceivest to appertain to the honor of thy Lord, be it ever so hard and unpleasant to thyself, thou wilt heartily embrace it, yea, with all thy might follow and desire it : yet, when thou wilt think thou hast done what is possible for thee, thou wilt think thou hast done nothing at all, yea, thou shalt be ashamed, and detest thyself, that thou hast so wretchedly and imperfectly served so noble and worthy a Lord ; and therefore, thou wilt desire and endeavor every hour to do and suffer greater and more perfect things than hitherto thou hast done, *forgetting the things that are behind, and pressing forward to those that are before.*

6. If thou hast in any measure attained to love and abide in God, then mayest thou keep the power of thy soul and thy senses, as it were, shut up in God, from gadding out to any worldly thing or vanity, as much as possible, where they have so joyfully a security and safeness. Sate thy soul in Him, and in all other things still see His blessed presence.

7. Whatsoever befall thee, receive it not from the hand of any creature, but from Him alone, and render back all to Him, seeking in all things His pleasure and honor, the purifying and subduing of thyself. What can harm thee, when all must first touch God, within whom thou hast enclosed thyself?

8. When thou perceivest thyself thus knit to God, and thy soul more fast and joined nearer to Him than to thine own body, then shalt thou know His everlasting, and incomprehensible, and ineffable goodness, and the true nobleness of thy soul, that came from Him, and was made to be reunited to Him.

9. If thou wouldst ascend and come up to thy Lord God, thou must climb up by the wounds of His blessed humanity, that remain as it were for that use ; and when thou art got up there, thou wouldst rather suffer death than willingly commit any sin.

10. Entering into Jesus, thou castest thyself into an infinite Sea of Goodness, that more easily drowns and happily swallows thee up, than the ocean does a drop of water. Then shalt thou be hid and transformed in Him, and shalt often be as thinking without thought, and knowing without knowledge, and loving without love, comprehended of Him whom thou canst not comprehend.

## SECTION VI.

1. Too much desire to please men, mightily prejudgeth the pleasing of God.

2. Too great earnestness and vehemency, and too greedy de-

light in bodily work and external doings scattereth and loseth the tranquillity and calmness of the mind.

3. Cast all thy care on God, and commit all to His good pleasure: laud, and praise, and applaud Him in all things, small and great. Forsake thy own will, and deliver up thyself freely and cheerfully to the will of God, without reserve or exception, in prosperity and adversity, sweet or sour, to have or to want, to live or to die.

4. Disunite thy heart from all things, and unite it only to God.

5. Remember often, and devoutly, the life and passion, the death and resurrection, of our Saviour Jesus.

6. Descant not on other men's deeds, but consider thine own: forget other men's faults, and remember thine own.

7. Never think highly of thyself, nor despise any other man.

8. Keep silence and retirement as much as thou canst, and through God's grace, they will keep thee from snares and offences.

9. Lift up thy heart often to God, and desire in all things His assistance.

10. Let thy heart be filled and wholly taken up with the love of God, and of thy neighbor; and do all that thou dost, in that sincere charity and love. The sum is:

1. Remember always the presence of God.

2. Rejoice always in the will of God. And,

3. Direct all to the glory of God.

## SECTION VII.

1. Little love, little trust; but a great love brings a great confidence.

2. That is a blessed hope that doth not slacken us in our duty, nor maketh us secure, but increaseth both a cheerful will, and gives greater strength to mortification and all obedience.

3. What needest thou, or why travailest thou about so many things? Think upon one, desire and love one, and thou shalt find great rest. Therefore,

4. Wherever thou be, let this voice of God be still in thine ear: My son, return inwardly to thy heart, abstract thyself from all things, and mind Me only. Thus,

5. With a pure mind in God, clean and bare from the memory of all things, remaining unmoveable in Him, thou shalt think and desire nothing but Him alone; as though there were nothing else in the world but He and thou only together; that all thy faculties and powers being thus re-collected into God, thou mayest become one spirit with Him.

6. Fix thy mind on thy crucified Saviour, and remember continually His great meekness, love, and obedience, His pure chas-

tity, His unspeakable patience, and all the holy virtues of His humanity.

7. Think on His mighty power and infinite goodness ; how He created and redeemed thee ; how he justifieth thee, and worketh in thee all virtues, graces, and goodness : and thus remember Him, until thy memory turn into love and affection. Therefore,

8. Draw thy mind thus from all creatures, unto a certain silence and rest from the jangling and company of all things below God ; and when thou canst come to this, then is thy heart a place meet and ready for thy Lord God to abide in, there to talk with thy soul.

9. True humility gaineth and overcometh God Almighty, and maketh thee also apt and meet to receive all graces and gifts. But alas ! who can say that he hath this blessed meekness, it being so hard, so uncertain, so secret and unknown a thing, to forsake and mortify perfectly and exactly thyself, and that most venomous worm of all goodness, vain glory ?

10. Commit all to the high providence of God, and suffer nothing to rest or enter into thy heart, save only God. All things in the earth are too base to take up thy love or care, or to trouble thy noble heart, thy immortal and heavenly mind. Let them care and sorrow, or rejoice about these things, who are of the world, for whom Christ would not pray.

11. Thou canst not please nor serve two masters at once : thou canst not love divers and contrary things ; if, then, thou wouldst know what thou lovest, mark well what thou thinkest most upon. Leave Earth, and have Heaven ; leave the World, and have God.

12. All sin and vice springeth from the property of our own will, all virtue and perfection cometh and groweth from the mortifying of it, and the resigning of it wholly to the pleasure and will of God.

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# HENRY'S COMMENTARY.

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